Black theology, Pentecostalism and racial struggles in the Church of God

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BLACK THEOLOGY, PENTECOSTALISM AND RACIAL STRUGGLES IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

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Abstract

In 1906, the modern Pentecostal Movement started in the city of Los Angeles at the Azusa Street Mission under the leadership of William J. Seymour, the son of former slaves. At the centre of this movement were two defining characteristics: the phenomenon of *glossolalia* and healing, understood individually and collectively to include racial integration. The former has become the distinctive and *sine qua non* of classical Pentecostalism, while the latter is an underdeveloped aspiration. The racialisation of Pentecostal organizational development and polity is perceived as a distorted medium of the message of the Gospel. There are renewed efforts to rediscover the short-lived racial integration of early Pentecostalism. The Memphis colloquy of 1994 was a defining *inter*-Pentecostal moment, engendering a theological and political debate on race and power in Pentecostal ecclesiology and the need for Black Pentecostals in the Church of God, to articulate more clearly their legitimate struggle for equality in ministry.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part I looks briefly at the historical development of Pentecostalism and the emergence of the Black Majority Church in post-War Britain, as well as a critique of Black British Pentecostal theological research. Part II looks at the Pentecostal doctrine of 'initial evidence' and the 'Black Theology' of James Cone. In the former, Pentecostal religious identity is still expressed and defined in this most distinctive and divisive teaching of glossolalia; in the latter, Cone's theology offers new perspectives for understanding, and appropriating, the Christian

faith in ways which are compatible with Black Christian identity, 'consciousness' and the experience of racism. Part III critically examines the racial reconciliation discourse in Pentecostalism and the struggles for equality and *internationalization* in the Church of God. The conclusion raises questions about the future of the younger generation of 'conscious' Black British Christians in a racially hegemonic Church of God.

Acknowledgements

Undertaking a Ph.D is a formidable challenge. I'm conscious that I've only being able to complete this work because of the tremendous support and encouragement received from my own 'cloud of witness'. I want to thank Professor Peter Clarke, my first supervisor, for his invaluable support and encouragement over the years. I want to pay a special tribute to my second supervisor, Professor Colin Gunton, whose recent death is a great loss to King's College and the Christian community. I also want to thank the Dean, Dr. Richard Burridge, for his helpful comments, and King's Theological Trust for its generous financial assistance.

I am grateful to all the 'saints' at Mile End New Testament Church of God for their love and support, especially Revd. Joel Edwards. The church's support has helped me to complete the task, but their love and faith has renewed my faith in Christ and helped me to find my place in the vineyard of Christian 'ministry'. I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to Judith N Jackman and to Dr. Godfrey Brandt for typing and commenting on the dissertation respectively. I also want to thank Herman and Adelaide Allen from Mile End.

Special thanks are due to my beloved wife, Pauline, and our daughters, Rachel, Kemi, Samara, Shani-Akilah and Rasheeda, for their love and perpetual succour. Special thanks are also due to my parents and my brothers and sisters.

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Jim Brandeberry, former Dean of the Apostolic Bible College, and to the memory of the late Dr. Emmanuel Arhu of Mile End New Testament Church of God.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

Introduction - Pentecostalism, Racial Polity And Research Priorities

'God's not dead, He is alive. God's not dead, He is alive. I feel Him in my hands; I feel Him in my feet; I feel Him all over me.'

Goodbye world, I'll stay no longer with you. Goodbye pleasures of sin, I'll stay no longer with you. I've made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life.'

'Born, born, born again, thank God I'm born again. Born, born, born again, thank God I'm born again. Born of the water, the Spirit and the blood, thank God I'm born again.'

Popular Pentecostal Choruses sung at Mile End New Testament Church of God

0.0 'When the Spirit Comes': Pentecostalism, Secularization and the Search for Meaning

Pentecostalism is a phenomenon of the Spirit[1], it is more than glossolalia and the experience of 'speaking in tongues'. Black Pentecostalism in Britain can be seen as the accentuation of the Spirit in the lived-experience and spiritual reality of Pentecostals. As a modern 'religious renaissance', Pentecostal spirituality, according to Harvey Cox[2], has challenged the religious and cultural landscape as well as some of the sociological prognostications of the 'decline' of religion. In 1965, Cox showed in his classic work how the seeds and sources of the 'secular city' would produce values of pluralism and tolerance, contributing to an epoch whose ethos would be characterised by

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[1] The *locus classicus* of Pentecostalism is the Lucan narrative in Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48; 19:1-7. See also Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, London, SCM Press:1972, pp.321-352.

[2] Harvey Cox, Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century, London, SCM: 1995.

'no religion at all'[3]. In Cox's 'secular metropolis' the 'gods of traditional' religion are dethroned and religion is rendered innocuous; it is reduced to the 'private fetishes' with no role to play in public life:

> The forces of secularisation have no serious interest in persecuting religion. Secularization simply bypasses and undercuts religion and goes on to other things. It has relativized religious world-views and thus rendered them innocuous. Religion has been privatised. It has been accepted as the peculiar prerogative and point of view of a particular person or group. Secularization[4] has accomplished what fire and chain could not: It has convinced the believer that he *could* be wrong, and persuaded the devotee that there are more important things than dying for the faith. The gods of traditional religions live on as private fetishes or the patrons of congenial groups, but they play no role whatever in the public life of the secular metropolis.[5]

Three decades later, in the face of the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism[6] and the wider religious revival, Cox admits that the 'death of

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3 Harvey Cox, The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective, London, SCM Press:1965, p.2. In speaking of modern man getting used to living 'without God', Dietrich Bonhoeffer prefigured and envisaged a 'religionless' age as part of the character and condition of modernity. (See his Letters and Papers from Prison, London, SCM Press: 1953.

4 Secularisation and its consequences were the themes of Lesslie Newbigin's 1964 *Firth Lectures*, later published as Honest Religion for Secular Man, London, SCM Press:1966. In his discourse, Newbigin is careful to distinguish two critical features of secularisation which are often overlooked, the 'positive' and the 'negative' aspects of this key sociological concept. Interestingly enough, Newbigin views the 'positive' aspect of the process as being compatible with the biblical perspective of human freedom given 'in Christ for mastery of the created world': 'Negatively, it is the withdrawal of areas of life and activity from the control of organised religious bodies, and the withdrawal of areas of thought from the control of what are believed to be revealed religious truths. Positively, it may be seen as the increasing assertion of the competence of human science and techniques to handle human problems of every kind. In a biblical perspective ...this can be seen as man entering into the freedom given to him in Christ, freedom from the control of all other powers, freedom for the mastery of the created world which was promised to man according to the Bible. At its best the secular spirit claims the freedom to deal with everyman simply as man and not as the adherent of one religion or another, and to use all of man's mastery over nature to serve the real needs of man.' (pp.8-9)

5 Harvey Cox, The Secular City, p.2; Steve Bruce, Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1996 (especially chapter 3 "The Erosion of the Supernatural", pp.24-68)

6 See D.B. Barrett, 'Global Statistics', in Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (ed.), Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House: 1989, pp.810-830; D.B. Barrett, G.T. Kurian and T.M. Johnson (eds.), World Christian Encyclopaedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the

God' pronouncements of theologians and 'the waning of religion that sociologists had extrapolated'[7] did not reach prophetic fulfilment. Pentecostal spirituality, and the religious renaissance in the penultimate quarter of the twentieth century, seems to have survived both the Marxian theoretical wish-fulfilment for the 'abolition of religion'[8] and the Comteian project for a new secular 'religion'[9] or a new '*sociocracy*' as Aron terms it, precisely because it offers *meaning* to personal and collective existence, as well as, according to Becker, 'an ideal of strength and of potential for growth'.[10]

The search for meaning, the persistence of faith and the perennial function of religion, identified as 'too great and permanent an element in human experience',[11] does not only invalidate what Tocqueville commented upon as the 'simple explanation' of eighteenth century thinkers concerning the decline of religious zeal (namely the relationship between

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Modern World, 2 Vols, 2nd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press:2001; Hollenweger, Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers:1997.

7 Harvey Cox, Fire From Heaven, p. xvi.

8 In his '*Toward a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', Marx 's gives, what has become a central current of sociological and philosophical critique of religion, his classic assessment of religion as illusion, 'spiritual aroma' and the 'illusory sun' that resolves around man. See Karl Marx, Early Writings, (written in 1844, introduced by Lucio Colletti and translated by Rodney Livingstone and George Benton) Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1975, pp.243-257; John Milbank, Theology & Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers: 1990, especially chapter 7 "For and Against Marx" pp.177-205; James Cone, God of the Oppressed, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Seabury Press: 1975, pp39-47; Alasdair Macintyre, Marxism & Christianity, London, Gerald Duckworth &Co. Ltd.:1969; Alistair Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology, London & Philadelphia, SCM & Trinity Press International:1990, pp. 3-87; Peter Clarke and Peter Byrne (ed), Religion Defined and Explained, London, Macmillan Press: 1993.

9 Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol.1, (translated by Richard Howard and Helen Weaver) Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 191965, pp.63-109

10 Ernest Becker, The Birth and Death of Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin: 1972 (first published by the Free Press: 1962), p.196.

11 Newbigin, op. cit., p.9.

'enlightenment' and religious decline), it also legitimates the authenticity and 'reality' of religious beliefs and encounter with the '*Other*'– experience of 'the Sacred'.[12] Modern day Pentecostalism can be seen as a form of 'religious zeal'; and what Cox concluded in the closing decade of the twentieth century has cultural and intellectual affinity with the observations made by Tocqueville writing in the 1830s:

> Eighteenth century philosophers had a very simple explanation for the gradual weakening of beliefs. Religious zeal, they said, was bound to die down as enlightenment and freedom spread. It is tiresome that the facts do not fit this theory at all.'[13]

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[12] See Martin Buber, Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relationship Between Religion and Philosophy, New York, Harper & Row:1952; Leszek Kolakowski, Religion, Glasgow, Fontana: 1982, pp.9-17, 160-206; Brian Davies (ed), Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2000.

[13] Alex de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, London, Fontana: 1968, 1: 364.

New Testament Church of God, Brighton Convention 1991

As the annual highlight in NTCG calendar, Conventions are occasions for celebration and renewal. This picture shows aspects of NTCG cultural life and demographics: the predominance of women (over 65 per cent), and the conservative 'dress code'.

To a large extent, Pentecostal spirituality and the 'unanticipated resurgence of religion,' as Cox argues, constitutes what Gilles Kepel calls 'the revenge of God'.[14] The phenomenon of Pentecostalism with its understanding of 'experienced' pneumatology and 'charismatic Christianity' is, according to Martin, 'the largest global shift in the religious market place over the last forty years'[15]. With estimated annual growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches at the rate of 20 million, and with a world wide membership of over 543 million, it is, perhaps, easy to understand Martin's claims of the global shift in the 'religious market place' which is characteristically Pentecostal. For Cox, the Pentecostal phenomenon is a refutation of the 'sobering projection' of the scholars who predicted that the growth in technology and twentieth century socio-political consciousness would 'increasingly shove religion to the margin':

> Even before I started my journey through the world of Pentecostalism it had become obvious that instead of the 'death of God' some theologians pronounced not many years ago, or the waning of religion that sociologists had extrapolated, something quite different has taken place. The prognosticators had written that the technological pace and urban bustle of the twentieth century would increasingly shove religion to the margin where, deprived of roots, it would shrivel. They allowed that faith might well survive as a valued heirloom, perhaps in ethnic enclaves of family customs, but insisted that religion's days as a shaper of culture and history were over.
>
> This did not happen. Instead, before the academic forecasters could even begin to draw their pensions, a religious renaissance of sorts is under way all over the globe. Religions that some theologians thought had been stunned by western materialism or suffocated by totalitarian repression have regained a whole new vigor.[16]

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14 Cited in Harvey Cox, Fire from Heaven, p.xvii.
15 David Martin, Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers: 2002, p.xvii.
16 Harvey Cox, Fire From Heaven, p.xvi.

0.1 Experience and the Charismatic Community

To *be* a Pentecostal is not merely to assent to a set of 'doctrinal commitments',[17] rather it is the *experience* of the Spirit in the life, struggles and imagination of believers in a 'charismatic community'[18]. For Pentecostals, belonging to this community and the experience of the Spirit brings life, joy, transformed expectations and power to witness as promised in Acts:

> But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The transformation of this lived-experience and existential reality manifests itself in a number of ways. Often it is seen and experienced in Pentecostal rituals, liturgy, sermons, prayers, enthusiasm and commitment to social change. The 'organised spontaneity'[19] of Black Pentecostal worship and oral

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[17] 'Black Pentecostalism', argues Joel Edwards, 'has never been preoccupied with a theological explanation of the "priesthood of all believers" or with the concept of body ministry.' Black Pentecostalism is rather concerned with the reality of 'spiritual worship' and the meaning and importance of worshipping 'in spirit and in truth' according to John 4:22. (See Edwards, 'The Pentecostal Distinctives', pp.75-83 in Let's Praise Him Again: An African-Caribbean Perspective on Worship, Joel Edwards (ed), Eastbourne, East Sussex, Kingsway Publication: 1992.

[18] See Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology, London, SCM Press:1977, p.299.

[19] Edwards, op. cit., p.68. Edwards delineates seven features of this 'organised spontaneity' of Black Pentecostal worship as follows: (1) *the devotional service*, (2) further *singing and testimonies*, (3) *special prayer*, often 'for the sick and those needing ministry', (4) *offering*, (5) *special singing*—it is 'unusual for the preacher to come before the ground had been "ploughed" with singing to prepare the hearts to "receive the preacher"', (6) *the sermon*—a sermon 'may last from forty to sixty minutes', (7) *the altar call*—here both Christians and non-Christians are 'given an opportunity to make an appropriate response to the preached word'. Although Edwards outlines the characteristic, the 'typical pattern', of Black Pentecostal worship service, the format is rescued from *formalism* by a belief in the *presence* and *operation* of the Spirit in these worship services. In these services Pentecostals believe that God will speak to them, heal them, bless them and empower them to transform negative social and personal reality. In Mile End New Testament Church of God, moderators and worship leaders believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit is 'ushered in through songs

liturgy, referred to by Edwards, is a characteristic feature of what conditions and inform this community, fuelling the transformation of Pentecostal lived experience and existential reality. Notwithstanding R.M. Anderson's argument of Pentecostals as 'socially disinherited'[20] people, Pentecostals do not only 'bear witness'[21] to a transformed spirituality, but they also see, in adopting aspects of Weber's 'this–worldly asceticism'[22], a correlation between belonging to their charismatic community and a transformation in their social and economic status. According to a second generation

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and praise' and all 'believers' are encouraged to participate in worship. The irony of Pentecostal 'organised spontaneity' as experience in this charismatic community led John Root to conclude in his *Encountering West Indian Pentecostalism*: 'When you have visited a black Pentecostal church, you know you have been to church.' (Grove Booklet, No. 66:1979, p.20.)

[20] Roberts Mapes Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism, New York, Oxford University Press:1979.

[21] The young New Testament Church of God rapper, Gifted, uses the phrase 'bear witness' as a leitmotif in his street and prison ministry. According to Gifted, Pentecostalism is fundamentally a 'spiritually transformed personal status'. For Gifted, 'to see a change you've got to *be* a change'.

[22] See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, London, Routledge: 1992 (Translated by Talcott Parsons with an Introduction by Anthony Giddens; first published in 1930 by Allen & Unwin). Among certain sections of the New Testament Church of God, one finds what can be called a *Pentecostal ethic* of upward mobility which Weber argued characterised Protestantism and informed the 'spirit of capitalism'. The internalisation and practice of the *Pentecostal ethic* of hard work, honesty, discipline, and a belief in God's love and 'calling' on one's life is producing, according to Pastor Allen of Mile End NTCG, a new generation of leaders in business and civic life. The relationship between religious ethics, or 'religious affiliation', and greater economic participation or appropriation is not casual. What is generally argued in Weber's thesis as characterising the relationship between 'ascetic Protestantism' and the 'sects' it spawned, on the one hand and the 'spirit of capitalism', on the other hand, is no less true of what is taking place in black British Pentecostalism. Upward mobility is becoming the *unintended consequences* of the black British Pentecostal ethic. Weber had stated the problem thus in regard to the 'remarkable frequency' with which Protestants dominated 'modern enterprise' and the 'higher grades of skilled labour': 'It is true that the greater relative participation of Protestants in the ownership of capital, in management, and the upper ranks of labour in great modern industrial and commercial enterprises, may in part be explained in terms of historical circumstances which extend far back into the past, and in which *religious affiliation is not a cause* of the economic conditions, but to a certain extent appears to be *the result* of them.' (pp.3-4). See also Yvonne Channer, I Am A Promise: The School Achievement of British Africans Caribbeans, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, Trentham Books: 1996. In this work, Channer shows how black British Pentecostals ideology of 'self-help' and discipline provides opportunities to 'rise above their social deprivation' and to 'build viewpoints that inspire to the realms of middle class respectability'. (pp.34-35)

Pentecostal leader, belonging to a Pentecostal community often enables individuals 'to rise above their environment to achieve more than their peers, through a belief in a God that does not discriminate...(because He) has great plans for His children'.[23] Far from seeing themselves as disadvantaged and on the fringes of society, some Pentecostals believe that God's personal care, concern and love for them actually places them among the '*advantaged*'. Finding God— having a 'personal experience'[24] and 'personal relationship' with God— and 'trusting Him in everything' defines this 'advantaged' status:

> Pentecostalism is the religion of the advantaged in that we have found God. We have an advantage over those who are lost and have no hope. God is hope! We are ordinary people who have allowed God by the "working of the Spirit" to lead us in our decision-making, career and ambition.[25]

0.2 Why the Research? Identifying the Researcher, Priorities & Methodology

Theological research does not take place in a theoretical vacuum. Researchers have their ethical and political priorities which must be understood and 'bracketed'. As a Black Pentecostal, I became interested in classical Pentecostalism and in understanding the social function of Pentecostalism in the Black community. The interest was initially fuelled by Bishop Martin Simmonds and Revd. Hewie Andrew, but for different

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23 Questionnaire response and interview with Pastor Herman Allen, Mile End New Testament Church of God (MENTCG), 12 December 2002.
24 Ibid. According to Pastor Allen, accepting Jesus as 'my *personal* Saviour' is central to Pentecostalism.
25 Steve Imuere, MENTCG Pastoral Council, Questionnaire response, December 2002.

reasons: Simmonds[26], the black Pentecostal wanted, especially after the publication of Hollenweger's *The Pentecostals* in 1972, a greater recognition and celebration of the Pentecostal tradition; Andrew, the Methodist 'radical', wanted black Pentecostal 'insiders' to write, research and reflect upon their history and traditions. For Andrew, this was a pedagogic and political imperative, as well as a theological one

I became particularly interested in Calley's understanding of black Pentecostalism and I also wanted to gauge the extent to which the 'ideology of withdrawal', spoken of by commentators like Calley and Pryce,[27] were being challenged in Pentecostal congregations, especially where the leadership was young and 'socially conscious'. This led me to Mile End New Testament Church of God, under the leadership of Joel Edwards. The New Testament Church of God (NTCG)[28] is the sister organisation of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, in the United States of America.

As a researcher my role and status changed, along with my original research focus, timetable and access as an 'insider': from the person in the congregation 'with the notebook', I became a 'participant observer', a member of the church, and the person with responsibility for 'community

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[26] Bishop Simmonds is a leader in the First United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic). His work, under the supervision of Walter Hollenweger, was among the first to focus on the life and worship of this black Pentecostal organisation. See Martin Howard Simmonds, A Portrayal of Identity: A Study of the Life and Worship of the First United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic), UK, Birmingham University, 1988.

[27] M. Calley, God's People: West Indian Pentecostal Sects in England, Oxford, Oxford University Press:1965; Ken Pryce, Endless Pressure: A Study of West Indian Life-Styles in Bristol, Middlesex, Penguin Books:1979.

[28] There are, of course, numerous Holiness and Pentecostal churches and organisations with the designation *Church of God* in their title. In the thesis, all reference to the Church of God refers to the **Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee**, and its daughter church in Britain, the New Testament Church of God (NTCG).

affairs'. As a result of my research and my role in the church, I found myself in a particularly new situation (*sitz im leben)*, often acting as the quasi-theo-political adviser to Black Pentecostal leaders, and representing a 'Black Christian' perspective on social issues. This was especially the case in respect of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the Black church's response to police-community relations in London. Of course, in this particular instance, when one becomes part of a 'fellowship', its aspirations (and disappointments) and the shared discourse of a congregation, 'research' has a seductive tendency to become action-orientated and experiential. One often experiences something of the vibrancy and dynamic impact of Pentecostal services alluded by John Root[29], but after years with one congregation one also discovers Black Pentecostalism's 'inner meaning',[30] as Cox terms it, and discern the spiritual and personal source of its appeal. It would be dishonest to say that my research and interaction with Mile End NTCG has been purely intellectual. Indeed, the study of living religious communities is often a dynamic mutuality of trust and confidence between the researcher and the researched community. In my relationship with the church, I think I derived the greater benefit as I discovered new spiritual resources for my journey of faith by living, praying, and testifying with 'the saints' at Mile End.

Unlike Pryce who feigned conversion, and underwent baptism in a Pentecostal church in Bristol,[31] to gain access to the 'saints', I had privileged

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[29] John Root, op. cit.
[30] Harvey Cox, op. cit., p.xvii.
[31] Pryce's decision to undergo baptism in order to be 'accepted' by the 'saints' raises a number of ethical and methodological questions, which Pryce does not discuss. The experience of baptism is described thus by Pryce: 'In their eyes I was still an 'unsaved'

access to Pentecostals and their private papers as an 'insider'. However, my priorities and preoccupations changed radically after I attended the 1996 *Unity of the Spirit* conference in Cleveland, Tennessee. I was confronted with the reality of a racially polarized Church of God and Black ministers who had been waging a 'civil rights' struggle in the Church of God. This conference was inspired by the 1994 inter-Pentecostal Memphis Racial Reconciliation Conference.

Ironically, at the height at the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1998 Joel Edwards of the NTCG, and another member, were giving oral and written evidence to Sir William Macpherson about institutional racism in society while at the same time also battling with racism in the Church of God. Although the Macpherson Report was an inquiry into the tragic murder of Stephen Lawrence and aimed at the police service, it reopened the discourse on racism in ways which would theologically and politically challenge religious organisations to examine the extent to which racism could be 'detected' in their policies, practices and structures. Leaders in the NTCG were aware of the experience of racism in the Church of God; and they could not escape the theo-political implications of its White-dominated structure of power in their struggle for equality in ministry. This theo-political

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person, untutored in the ways of the church. To be accepted into their fold and treated as one of them, I needed to be 'saved', and I could only achieve this through baptism. What I was discovering was that to learn more about the church from the standpoint of ordinary members, I needed to be on the inside as a fully fledged believer. I had no choice therefore but to give in one Sunday morning when I and other unsaved persons like myself were called to the altar and asked if we were ready to be baptized. With hands laid on our heads, we were prayed for and cajoled into baptism, which we all did. After my baptism, there was great rejoicing, and it was thought that the Holy Ghost was at work that day, and that a promise to the church had been fulfilled. Baptism did make a difference to my status among saints. I was now treated with a new candour.' (Ken Pryce, Endless Pressure, pp.285-286.)

relationship, and the struggle for equality became a central strand in the final structure of the thesis. What this has meant is that other issues of Pentecostal culture and practice have had to be omitted, giving priority to that of the racial tensions in the Church— the issue that Black leaders are still angry about, and the White leaders still hope that it will quietly go away. Very late in the research, I came to realize, after extensive discussions with key Black Pentecostal leaders, that some of the issues my research dealt with *may* be a modest contribution to a historic problem of race in the Church of God and its implications for its daughter branch—the New Testament Church of God in Britain.

It is recognised, on the one hand, that there is a dichotomy in the 'insider/outsider' view of the study of religion and ritual,[32] and that the researcher's status and 'negotiated position as insider and outsider', on the other hand, are affected by the different ways in which 'religious organisations and rituals incorporate racial, gender-based, and class-based cultural material'.[33] The concept of 'objectivity' in the 'insider-outsider' continuum can not be avoided. However, there can be in the study of religions and religious phenomenon an intellectual and ethical middle path that steers away from the 'insider's' perspective 'bent on painting the most

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[32] See Bilal Sambur, 'From the Dichotomy of Spiritual/Ritualism to the Dichotomy of Insider/Outsider' in Elisabeth Arweck and Martin D. Stringer (ed), Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual, Birmingham, University of Birmingham Press:2002.

[33] Loweell W. Livezey, 'Epilogue: The Ethnographer and the Quest for Meaning' in Arweck and Stringer, op. cit., p.163.

attractive picture' and that of the 'outsider' who is 'determined to write an exposé'.[34]

Although I had reservations about the church's constitutional position on the role of women and its record on 'race', I became a member after publicly agreeing to abide by the Church of God statement of faith and discipline. Because there are 'relational' degrees of 'access' (being a Black Pentecostal does not necessarily make one an insider, there are also elements of Church of God 'shared discourse' and doctrinal 'distinctives' and psychology which consolidate the insider's status) and to religious communities, the 'insider/outsider' dichotomy will inevitably present epistemological challenges to the 'objectivity' of the researcher.

The more time I spent with this congregation the more note books I filled, but I also came to the conclusion that both Calley and Pryce had overstated their case. This was, partly, based upon a limited sample, a limited amount of time with Pentecostal congregations and, in the case of Pryce, a quasi-Marxian understanding of religion. The face of Pentecostalism was, inevitably, changing; and the 'ideology of withdrawal' from the world became a footnote instead of a serious thesis.

Issues of race and religion, Christianity and the 'Black experience' were becoming increasingly challenging for Black British Pentecostals. The New Cross fire of 1981, the inner-city disturbances of the same year, and the tragic racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 were defining moments for the Black community. Although members of the Lee NTCG (South East

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34 See Harvey Cox, op. cit., p.xvii.

London) lost friends and family members in the fire, there was no co-ordinated attempt by the NTCG to effectively engage in some of the social and political debates and campaigns around these issues. The official position of the Church is summarized by Dr. Arnold (General Overseer of NTCG, 1984-94). Indeed, Arnold argued that NTCG had, in effect, adopted a policy of splendid isolation in regard to socio-political issues, (especially 'political awareness') in society:

> In spite of the fact that a few churches had sought to engage in some social projects, it was not Church policy; and, as such, the Head Office never encouraged or suggested the development of any co-ordinated system...Consequently, the Church had not adequately stressed the issues of social mobilization, political awareness, economic development, and co-operative participation; and more significantly, the role that individual Christians were required to play without compromising their faith. This resulted in some of the more educated members perceiving the Church as being out of touch with reality and unable, or unwilling, to address itself to current issues that affect the everyday life of the community.[35]

However, a few courageous NTCG leaders, like Ira Brooks, raised concerns about the inactivity of the Black Church in providing community leadership and challenging injustice and discrimination, especially after the New Cross Fire:

> To say that the New Cross Fire Disaster of January 1981 did in a sense burn our New Testament Church of God is a fact. Despite all these unpleasant events on our own front doorstep, no decisions have so far been taken regarding the role of the Church...It is part of our Christian values to protest against injustice and inequality on the one hand, and to support discipline and coherence on the other hand.[36]

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35 S. E. Arnold, From Scepticism to Hope: One Black-Led Church's Response to Social Responsibility, Nottingham, Grove Books Ltd.:1992, p.53.
36 Ira Brooks, 'Where Do We Go From Here?'—A History of 25 Years of the New Testament Church of God in the United Kingdom, 1955-1980, London, Charles Raper:1982, p.77.

Dr S.E. Arnold identified the church's lack of involvement in the socio-economic struggles of its members and the wider community by reference to its historic 'spiritual ministry' and adoption of 'a theology yet to be realized'[37]:

> Since its arrival in Britain, the NTCG has strongly emphasized a spiritual ministry. In seeking to propagate its particular kind of evangelicalism in a post-Christian British society, it neglected the socio-economic needs of its members, thus being unbalanced in its presentation of the ministry of Christ to the whole person. In addition, programmes were projected mainly to Church members and not to facilitate the wider community.[38]

Recognising that the Black-led Church's 'record in the pursuit of racial justice is a chequered one', and that its 'contribution to the racial justice debate has been behind the scenes'[39], the murder of Stephen Lawrence was a wake-up call to a number of leaders in the NTCG to 'take up the challenge' spoken of by Brooks to be more visible in the social and political struggles against injustice and discrimination. This resulted in members of the Mile End NTCG giving oral and written evidence in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1998, and to the subsequent launch of the Black Christian Civic Forum (BCCF) [40] in January 1999 at Mile End NTCG.

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[37] S.E. Arnold, op. cit., p.37.

[38] Ibid., p.53.

[39] Written submission to the Lawrence Inquiry from Senior Black Church Clergy, Bethnal Green, October 1998, p.1. Joel Edwards, R. David Muir, Ron Nathan and Abraham Lawrence gave evidence to the Inquiry (Part 2) at Bethnal Green, London, representing the senior Black Church Leaders. In summarizing the experience of the interaction with the police service over the last 30 years, Black church leaders argued: 'the experience of black people over the last 30 years has been that we have been over policed and, to a large extent, under protected.' See The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, (p.312).

[40] The press launch of BCCF took place 18 January (Martin Luther King Day) in the House of Commons. BCCF was the 'response by Black Christians to the need for the Black-Majority churches in Britain to get more involved in politics and to speak clearly and prophetically on

Although ACEA, through its Theological Study Group, the Simon of Cyrene Theological Institute and The Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership, introduced a number of Pentecostal leaders and Pastors to James Cone through aspects of their curriculum and theological training, the 'Black Theology' of James Cone was still marginal in the New Testament Church. Its political imperative and its radical hermeneutical identification with 'Black Power' rendered it hermeneutically suspicious to 'conservative' Pentecostalism, black or white. The leadership seminars and 'cross-cultural' conferences organised by ACEA's[41] Theological Study Group tried to make the link for Black Pentecostals between the insights of James Cone and the kind of 'Black Christian consciousness' which could be maintained with Biblical integrity and cultural authenticity. Essentially, this was the kind of nascent Black political consciousness which affirmed the righteousness and history of Black struggles against racism, but also 'laid hold' of 'the efficacy of personal redemption' offered in the Gospel. This sort of 'Black Theology' and black consciousness could be found in Cone. Unfortunately, leaders in the NTCG were not exposed to this form of Black Christian political theology, even though they were raising questions about the relationship between Christianity and 'black consciousness'.

However, Black Pentecostals were articulating their own form of 'Black Theology' in Mile End New Testament Church; and this was best

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social and racial issues'. See BCCF Launch programme, 23 January, 1999; Robert Beckford, Dread and Pentecostal: A political Theology for the Black Church in Britain, London, SPCK: 2000, p.1; *Weekly Journal*, 11 September, 1998; *The Church of England Newspaper*, 30 October, 1998; *The Independent on Sunday*, 11 October, 1998.

41 *African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance.*

exemplified through the education sessions facilitated by Dr Carol Tomlin, and the 'Cultural Weekends' organised by Yvonne Hall from ACEA and others. James Cone finally gained 'respectability'[42] in the NTCG in 1991. At the conference on '*Black Theology*' organised by ACEA, Dr Arnold, the Overseer of the NTCG at the time, stated that the church needed to take Cone seriously and 'embrace' his theological insights.

0.3 Structure of the Dissertation

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part one looks briefly at Pentecostalism and the emergence of the Black Majority Church in post-War Britain, as well as a critique of Black British Pentecostal theological research. Particular attention is paid to the *Dread* Pentecostal thesis of Robert Beckford. Part two focuses on the Pentecostal doctrine of 'initial evidence' and the 'Black Theology' of James Cone. In the former, Pentecostal religious identity is still expressed and defined in this most distinctive and divisive teaching of glossolalia; in the latter, Cone's theology offers a perspective for understanding, and appropriating, the Christian faith in ways which are compatible with Black Christian identity and the experience of racism. Although James Cone's 'Black Theology' is not widely read in Black Pentecostal churches in Britain, the language and insights of Cone offers a framework for developing an authentic Black Christian identity that is both

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42 This was the view expressed by Joel Edwards at the 1991 ACEA conference on Black Theology at the Mile End New Testament Church of God. Although the black scholar Gayraud Wilmore was invited to Overstone Bible College in 1984 by the Principal, Revd Ridley Usherwood, in conjunction with Roswith Gerloff and B.A. Mazibuko of the Centre for Black & White Christian Partnership, to give a series of lectures on Black Religion and Black Theology, this was the first major 'Black Theology' conference.

Christian and 'Black conscious', notwithstanding difficulties Pentecostals may have with Cone's radical identification of the Gospel with the politics of 'Black power'.

Part three critically examines the historic problem of 'racism' in Pentecostalism and the struggles for equality, especially the 1994 Memphis Racial Reconciliation conference, and the Church of God Black Ministers' *Unity of the Spirit* conference. The conclusion raises questions about the extent to which second and third generation Black 'conscious' British Pentecostals will negotiate the problems of racial inequality in the Church of God and maintain their integrity.

Chapter One - Black Pentecostalism And Black Theology - Critique Of Research & Developments

1.0 Introduction to the Terrain of Black Pentecostal and Black Theological Research

Over the last three decades, there has been a lively interest in Pentecostalism and the charismatic phenomenon[1]. This interest is not only among the academics ('outsiders') but it is also gaining a new urgency among Pentecostals ('insiders') themselves. Insiders are predominantly those Black Pentecostal pioneers who established churches in the UK in the post-Windrush era; it also includes second and third generation Black British Pentecostals whose experience of religion and social reality have both informed and influenced their response to Pentecostalism and 'Black Theology'. The insights of Pentecostal pioneers like Dr O.A. Lyseight (the first Overseer of the New Testament Church of God in the UK) and Ira Brooks (historian of the New Testament Church) are different in degree, not in kind. As 'insiders', they both portray the struggles of black Christians in Britain trying to negotiate an expression of faith which resonates with, and authenticates, their historical and cultural identity. Politically and theologically, the reflections of second and third generation 'insiders' like Robert Beckford and Joel Edwards differ in both degree and kind. Beckford's work is explicitly political, utilising black expressive cultures as a medium for theological reflection; Edwards' work attempts to negotiate the terrain between 'classical' black Pentecostalism and an emerging new progressive evangelicalism which embraces

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[1] See R. Gerloff, A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain and its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interactions (published version of Gerloff's Ph.D. dissertation: Birmingham, England, 1991), Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang:1992.

Pentecostal and charismatic fervency and spirituality. Undoubtedly, both Beckford and Edwards want to put distance between Black Pentecostalism and what Malcolm Calley referred to in the 1960s as '*the ideology of withdrawa*l', but their theologies and methodology for the creation of this distance are radically different. The centrality of Beckford's '*Dread*' thesis—a metaphor for the 'uplifting' of black people—provides a number of fecund cultural and political insights, but the symbolism and language of *Jesus is Dread,* as we shall discuss below, present difficulties for Pentecostals.

Wherever one places Pentecostalism on the conservative revolutionary continuum, or views its growth as a metasocial commentary, Pentecostalism has made its impact on the life, practice and experience of modern Christendom. As a significant part of modern religious and spiritual witness and discourse, Pentecostalism in its complex diversity is here to stay.

This chapter focuses on three main areas:

(i) explanations for the rise of the Black Majority churches in Britain and a brief history of the NTCG in the UK;

(ii) theological education and the problems encountered by black students;

(iii) the articulation of black Christian concerns and the attempt by key Black British religionist and theologians, especially Beckford, to develop a corpus of literature on the Black church and a 'Black British political theology[2]'.

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[2] In 1996 Robert Beckford argued for the development of a "Dread Jesus for the Black Church in Britain" and an alternative way for black Christians to "do theology" by using

Frank E. Manning[3] suggests a number of reasons for the interest in Pentecostalism among academics:

> The recent interest of social scientists in Pentecostalism reflects both the growth of an intriguing religious phenomenon and the diminishment of a traditional intellectual bias against the study of fundamentalist Christianity. Much of this interest has been generated by anthropological research in societies where colonialism in one form or another has been a dominant influence, and where Pentecostalism - in one form or another - has been for several decades a dynamic force in local life. Nowhere is the vitality of Pentecostalism more striking than in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean, a region where the conditions and circumstances of colonialism are played out daily.[4]

While academics of varying disciplines were under the spell of this 'intriguing religious phenomenon' those from within the Pentecostal faith communities also began to articulate their encounter with this 'dynamic force' as a form of socio-theological positioning, as well as a form of self-identification and self-understanding.

In looking at the corpus of literature on Black Theology and Black Pentecostalism in Britain, attention will be focused on the views of key commentators and sympathetic outsiders, along with those of Black Pentecostals, to illustrate the way in which they articulate the historical, theological and socio-political themes and concerns central to Pentecostal

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"black expressive cultures" as a theological resource. Beckford's approach was designed to "mobilise black Christians to engage in socio-political reflection on their faith experience in Britain", as well as to provide a methodology—a way of "doing theology that can act as a resource for theologians concerned with social justice in general and racial justice in particular". See Beckford's letter and synopsis to SPCK Press (28 Feb.1996). These ideas are later developed in Beckford's first book, Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain (1998), his doctoral thesis (Birmingham University 1999) and in his Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain, (2000). See also the points and departures in Beckford and Gerloff in Alan H. Anderson and Walter Hollenweger (ed), Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press: 1999.

3 See Frank E. Manning, "Pentecostalism – Christianity and Reputation" in Stephen D. Glazier (ed.) Perspectives on Pentecostalism—Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America, New York and London, University Press of America: 1980.

4 Ibid., p.37.

self-understanding, distinctiveness and identity. The context, content and some of the implicit and explicit challenges of black Pentecostals will also be examined.

1.1 Historical Context of Black Pentecostal Research

The works of Donald Gee[5], veteran Elim Pentecostal minister, in the first half of the twentieth century furnished an insightful commentary on the beliefs, practices and distinctive hermeneutics of the Pentecostals. But it was the early work of Calley[6], Hill [7]and Hollenweger[8] on black Pentecostals which generated and fuelled the interest in this movement in Britain. In many respects, Hollenweger follows Calley in his analysis and assessment of West Indian Pentecostalism in Britain. Calley explains the 'mushrooming' these churches as follows:

> West Indians join sects led by West Indians; the clergy of these sects with the largest following are predominantly West Indian; in two they are all West Indians. The most successful sects were established by immigrant West Indian preachers. Those established by Englishmen before the great influx of West Indians are much less successful. West Indians have imported their preachers and their sects ready made. They have not joined sects they found already operating in England.[9]

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5 See Donald Gee, Pentecostal Movement, London, Elim Publishing Co.,:1949.

6 Malcolm J. Calley, God's People: West Indian Pentecostal Sects in England, London, Oxford University Press:1965.

7 Hill, West Indian Migrants and the London Churches.

8 Hollenweger, The Pentecostals.

9 Hollenweger, op. cit., pp.188-189; Calley, *Race:* 3/2 May 1962, p59, and his 'West Indian Churches in England' in *New Society:* August 1964, p.17; Winston James and Clive Harris, Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain, London/New York, Verso:1993, pp9-54; Peter Fryer, Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain, London, Pluto Press:1984, pp.373-399, Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain, London, Harper Collins: 1998; Viviene Francis, With Hope In Their Eyes, London, Nia:1998; A Sivanandan, A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance, London, Pluto Press: 1982,pp.3-54.

Eleven years after the catastrophic hurricane in Jamaica in 1951, there were some 260,000 West Indians immigrants in Britain.[10] Many of these immigrants were regular Church attenders in the Caribbean, but this pattern changed on arrival to the 'Mother Country'. Clifford Hill explains the decline in church attendance among this immigrant group in his classic statement: 'It is like discovering that one's mother is a liar and a hypocrite.' [11]

Although church attendance in the Caribbean was high, the Pentecostals accounted for less than 6 per cent of the Caribbean Christian community[12]. This, of course, raises a number of questions about the emergence and growth of Black-led Pentecostal churches in Britain for Hill. The 'religious orientation', 'rejection' by the host society, and 'status' deprivation are the three put forward by Hill to explain the growth of black Pentecostal churches in Britain. The religious orientation of Black Pentecostals is a legacy of the Caribbean practice and nineteenth century Wesleyan Holiness[13] piety; and with its strict observances, and experience

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[10] Hollenweger, op. cit., p.187; Joel Edwards, "The Afro-Caribbean Community in Britain" in Martyn Eden (ed) Britain on the Brink, Nottingham, Crossway Books:1993.
[11] Clifford Hill, West Indian Migrants and the London Churches, London, Oxford University Press:1963, p.6.; see also his 'Some Aspects of Race and Religion in Britain, in David Martin and Michael Hill (ed), A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, Vol 3, London, SCM Press:1970, pp.30-47; Hollenweger, op. cit., p.187; Iain MacRobert's PhD dissertation (Birmingham, Englang:1989) chapter 3 "Jamaican Migration to Britain", pp.125-133.
[12] Hill, 'Some Aspects of Race and religion in Britain', p.40.
[13] Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, pp. 21-26; David T. Shannon and Gayraud S. Wilmore, (ed), Black Witness to the Apostolic Faith, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.:1988, pp.41-49; Donald W. Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism, NJ/London, The Scarecrow Press:1987, (especially chapter 2 "Methodist Roots of Pentecostalism", pp. 35-60; Douglas J. Nelson, 'For Such a Time as This: The Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival: A Search for Pentecostal Roots', (PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1981); Vinson Synan, The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.:1971; see article on the "Holiness Movement" by C.E. Jones in DPCM, pp.406-409, Bishop Ithiel C. Clemmons, Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ, California, Pneuma Life Publishing: 1996; Cecil M. Robeck,

of social rejection, Hill suggests that the faith of such groups is likely to have 'higher survival rate' than that of West Indians brought up in the traditionalist churches.[14]

According to Hill, the experience of 'rejection', and alienation, is not only from the host society, it is also from English Pentecostal organizations:

> The leaders of the immigrant sects[15] in Britain, having experienced rejection in wider society, claim also to have experienced the same rejection within English Pentecostal institutions and have thus withdrawn and formed their own sect organization. These are vigorously proselytising movements. There is a flavour of nationalism and ethnocentricity about their meetings that must appeal to the expatriate West Indian. Thus the immigrant's sense

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Jr, 'Pentecostal Origins From A Global Perspective' in Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (ed), All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press: 1993, pp. 166-180.

[14] Hill, op. cit., p.41.

[15] The sociological and theological typology of *sects* outlined by Martin in his A Sociology of English Religion (London, SCM Press: 1967) should still be seen, at best, as a 'heuristic tool' and not as a 'substantive description' (p.79). Indeed, there is a danger of the term being used, like terms like 'indoctrination', merely to describe phenomenon we are accustomed to, or idea and practices that we are attitudinally or culturally against. Sociologically, Hill does not problematise the notion of '*sects*' in his description of Pentecostals; he merely attaches the designation to them. Hollenweger, on the other hand, assigns the designation of '*churches*' to Pentecostals, thereby legitimising their practices within the diversity of Christian doctrine and the elasticity of liturgical practice. The characteristics of sects are defined thus in Bryan Wilson's classic statement 'Sects are voluntary bodies. Individuals have some choice, theoretically complete choice, in subscribing to sect tenets. The very concept of *sect* implies at least division, and usually diversity, of religious belief within a given society...Membership is by some test or merit: the individual must be worthy of membership. The sect has a strong sense of self-identity: who is admitted becomes 'one of us'. And this 'us' is set over against all others, the more compelling so because sects lay claim to special and usually exclusive access to supernatural truths...The sect, as the sole possessor of true doctrine, of appropriate ritual and of warranted standards of rectitude in social behaviour, regards itself as a people set apart, making claim, if not always to absolutely exclusive salvation, at least to the fullest blessing...belonging to a particular sect implies distance from, and perhaps hostility to, other sects and religious bodies.' (Religious Sects: A Sociological Study, New York/Toronto, McGraw-Hill Book Company: 1970, pp.26-27); see also Werner Stark, The Sociology of Religion: A Study of Christendom, (Vol. 2 Sectarian Religion), London, Routledge and Kegan Paul:1967, for a thorough discussion of the origin and functions of sectarianism. Stark argues that the 'chief reason' for sectarian groupings is individual 'unhappiness in, and revolt against, a social system within which their position' and livelihood and status is 'unsatisfactory'. (p.6) H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism, New York, Meridian:1962; Bryan Wilson, The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society, Oxford, Oxford University Press:1990. The sects and religious movements, according to Wilson, often emerge as opposition 'clerical monopoly of power' and a call to implicitly reject 'the division into separate classes of ministry and laity'. (pp. 115-116)

> of alienation from wider society, plus his need for the consolation and support of religion in a situation of stress, provide a strong motivation for him to ally himself with others who share his experience and who have found the consolation they require in a sect organization.[16]

Deprivation, the third factor in Hill's explanation for the growth of Black Pentecostalism in Britain, has a dual function: it builds 'social solidarity' and it perpetuates and intensifies the exclusive religious beliefs of the Pentecostals'. Although West Indians are economically 'far better off than they were in their homelands', they still, according to Hill, suffer from 'ethnic and status deprivation'; and the effects of this deprivation is to force West Indians into a 'particular status-group that has all the characteristics of immobility common to a caste'.[17] For Hill, the determinants of growth and the signs of black Pentecostalism 'becoming a major religious movement within the next decade or so' in Britain's religious landscape also had the danger of perpetuating a form of apartheid where black Pentecostals are 'ethnically and visibly distinct from wider society'.[18]

While Hill[19] views the emergence of West Indian Pentecostalism on the British religious landscape in a negative light (a very low view of West Indian Pentecostal Churches' says Hollenweger[20]) on account of their schismatic beliefs, teachings and their inherent 'separatist' tendencies which leads to an apartheid religion,[21] Calley sees the emergence of West Indian Pentecostalism much more in terns of class group solidarity,

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16 Hill, 'Some Aspects of Race and Religion in Britain', p.41.
17 Ibid., p.42.
18 Ibid., p.43.
19 See Hill, West Indian Migrant.
20 Op. cit., p.189.
21 See Hill's 'Some Aspects', p.43.

'individual satisfaction',[22] 'new self respect' and their response to the world through 'the ideology of withdrawal'[23]. Calley argues:

> West Indians coming to England seldom join English churches but bring their religious groups with them or develop new ones which are still firmly within the West Indian Pentecostal religious tradition...[24] Pentecostal sects (like many others) offer members a new set of values and a new self-respect...members who lack characteristic (occupation, education, possessions) carrying prestige in society at large, are persuaded that such things are unimportant. Were not Christ and His disciples equally lacking in the things of the world? The 'world' has not treated sect recruits with conspicuous generosity, and in its terms they are lacking in status, poor and powerless, but these characteristics are precisely those which are pleasing to God. In their devotion to him members make a virtue out of necessity, rejecting the values of the world which anyway they could not hope to achieve...This is the ideology of withdrawal, of turning from the world to God.[25]

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[22] Malcolm J.C. Calley, God's People: West Indian Pentecostal Sect in England, chapter 12.
[23] Ibid., p. 63.
[24] Ibid., p.1.
[25] Ibid., pp 134-135.

Angela Sarkis OBE

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The portrayal of Pentecostalism in general, and Black Pentecostalism in particular, as the 'religion of the oppressed' and the disenfranchised seeking hope in the 'otherworld' on account of their inability and unwillingness to come to terms with the social reality of the present world was characteristic of early sociology of the movement. In the fieldwork of Pryce, his classic description is given of the attitude and alienation of Black Pentecostals (the '*saints*' as Pryce calls them) in Bristol:

> It is clear that the religion of *saints* is a religion of the oppressed and that in their sermons and style of worship saints are reinterpreting Christianity to satisfy their own needs as working-class blacks in a white racist society. If one cannot accept society or be aggressive towards it with a view to reforming it, then one can devalue the significance of this world by withdrawing from it in a community of like-minded individuals and projecting one's hopes onto a supernatural and otherworldly kingdom. This otherworldly posture accounts for the doctrinal importance of the beatitudes in the ideology of the saints. By diverting their attention in a heavenly direction and explaining away the real objective cause of their predicament, the doctrine of the beatitudes helps saints to cope with their sense of alienation and powerlessness. This expectantly otherworldly focus is responsible for the charge, sometimes levelled against them, that they are 'so heavenly-minded, they are no earthly use'.[26]

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[26] Ken Pryce, Endless Pressure: A Study of West Indian Life-Styles in Bristol, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1979, p.211; see also Wilfred Wood. '*The Black Church Movement in Britain*' in A Handbook of the Afro-West Indian United Council of Churches, 1984 Edition, published by the Centre for Caribbean Studies; Steve Bruce, Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults, Oxford, Oxford University Press:1996; Robert Mapes Anderson, *A Social History of the Early Twentieth Century Pentecostal Movement* (Columbia University PhD thesis, 1969) later published as Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism, New York, Oxford University Press: 1979; Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, (translated by Ephraim Fischoff and introduced by Talcott Parsons, originally published in 1922) London, Methuen & Co Ltd: 1965, chapter 7, 'Religion of Non-Privileged Classes', pp.95-117. Weber points to the function of religion in the privileged and the 'disprivileged' classes and ways in which they seek social 'significance' and 'worthiness'; for the latter he says: '...the sense of honour of disprivileged classes rests on some concealed promise for the future which implies the assignment of some function, mission, or vocation to them. What they cannot claim to *be*, they replace by the worth of that which they will one day *become*, to which they will be called in some future life here after...Their hunger for a worthiness that has not fallen to their lot, they and the world being what it is, produces this conception from which is derived a rationalistic idea of a providence, a significance in the eyes of some divine authority possessing a scale of values different from the one operating in the world of man.' (p.106)

It is important to note the historical context (early 1960s and 1970s) in which this early Pentecostal research of Hill, Calley, and Pryce took place. Often referred to as the 'assimilationist' phase in the history of West Indian immigrants' experience in Britain[27], it would appear that many of the assumptions prevalent in the discourse on race relations and black Pentecostalism are unconsciously shared, or intimated, by these early commentators.[28] The question of racism and its impact on the lived-experience of the immigrant does not enter significantly the discourse by Hill and Calley; rather what seems to inform their frame of reference is the immigrant's dysfunctionalism - his inability to come to terms with the host society. In short, his failure to assimilate into the structures, modalities and ideologies of the 'mother-country'.[29] The children of the post-Windrush immigrants were, to a large degree, contending with the subtle and overt racism that greeted their parents as new comers to the 'mother-country'. The challenge of assimilation is best understood through the sentiments and values of Labour politicians at the time. The

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[27] See G.L. Brandt and R. David Muir "Schooling, Morality and Race" in *British Journal of Moral Education*: Vol.15 No.1 January 1986; Dilip Hiro, Black British, White British, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode:1971.

[28] This absence of a critique of racism as a critical factor in the black experience in this period is an important omission, serving to reinforce ways in which researchers often share the views, values and assumptions of the dominant social class or ruling group. Bishop Sydney Dunn came to England in the 1950s and established a church in Birmingham. Dunn states: "There was a lot of coloured prejudice at that time; the English people did not want us here..."(Interview, 14 October 1996)

[29] Ann Dummett, in her A Portrait of English Racism, Middlesex, England, Penguin Books:1973, recognised the role played by racism in society. Racism was the 'cloak of darkness' which portends the presence of 'something evil at hand'. (pp.10-11) Relating his experience of the 1950s, Philip Mohabir says: "I was soon to be disillusioned. After three visits, my friend and I were met at the door and told that they would be very pleased if I would never return to their meetings...So we both went away, with tears in our eyes. To think that this could happen in a Christian, evangelical meeting. It was simply incredible, mind-boggling. Surely loving Jesus should mean accepting your brother whatever his colour or culture. My first taste of fellowship with white evangelical English Christians left me bewildered and perplexed." See his Building Bridges, London, Hodder & Stoughton:1988, pp.54-55. Philip Mohabir later went on to be the founder and President of the West Indian Evangelical Alliance (later called the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance) in the early 1980s.

same day that West Indian immigrants arrived in Britain (22 June, 1948), eleven labour politicians wrote to the Prime Minister of the day, Clement Attlee, disapprovingly of the presence of these black 'British citizens' in the UK:

> This country may become an open reception centre for immigrants not selected in respect to health, education, training, character, custom...An influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life and to cause discord and unhappiness among all concerned.[30]

1.2 Beyond Racism and Mono-Causal Explanations for the Emergence of the Black Church in Britain

While Hollenweger avoids the mono-causal 'rejectionist' thesis as an explanation for the emergence of West Indian Pentecostals by referring to other factors such as antecedent Caribbean religious affiliations, climatology and the need for cultural solidarity, 'racial barriers' or racism is not a factor in his analysis:

> West Indian Pentecostal churches have sprung up because some West Indians belonged to Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like Baptist churches in the West Indies, and in cold, foggy England, there is little opportunity to meet and chat with one's neighbour on the street. The West Indian, therefore, wrongly thinks that he meets a racial barrier when he is really discovering that human relations in England and Christian England itself, are very different from what he expected them to be. The radical separation from this world, the best protection from these cold surroundings is a warm West Indian Pentecostal service.[31]

The extent to which racism, rejection, cultural 'incongruity', or other factors explain the rise of Black Majority churches in Britain is well

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30 Clive Harris, 'Post-War Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army' in Winston James and Clive Harris, op. cit., p.24; see also Sam King, Climbing the Rough Side of the Mountain, London, Minerva Press: 1998. King was one of the young Jamaicans on the Empire Windrush; he served in the RAF during the Second World War and later became the first black Mayor of the London borough of Southwark.

31 Op. cit., p. 190.

represented in the writings of Pentecostal 'insiders', as can be seen from the following examples below, especially from Dr Oliver A. Lyseight, the pioneering Bishop and founder of the New Testament Church of God in Britain. Joel Edwards, former General Secretary of the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance and General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, puts the issue in perspective:

> The newly arrived Caribbean Christian community of the 1950s and the 1960s participated in the struggles and traumas associated with any immigrant group in a minority situation. It sought for shelter under the canopy of the existing church structures and found little that resonated with its own expression of Christianity. This was not always the result of hostile rejection or polite indifference...but was also the result of a mismatch of cultural responses and the incongruity between the secularised formalities of many churches and the simple fervency of many Caribbeans.[32]

Io Smith is much more direct and unequivocal in her views on the issue:

> The first place I visited was a church, but nobody said, 'Welcome'...We felt a sense of rejection straightaway... Another member told me that: 'I think the church down the road wants black people...' I was looking for love, warmth and encouragement. I believed the first place I would find that was in the church, but it wasn't there.[33]

Whether one accepts Edwards' judicious explanation of this encounter in respect of cultural 'incongruity', or Smith's singular 'rejection' thesis, there are two seductive tendencies to be avoided.

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[32] Joel Edwards, "The British Afro-Caribbean Community" in Britain on the Brink, p103.
[33] Io Smith, An Ebony Cross, Marshall Morgan and Scott Publication Ltd: 1989, p. 40.

Dr Oliver A. Lyseight

Dr Lyseight became the first Overseer (1953-1978) of the New Testament Church of God.

The first is the seductive tendency to separate the history of *the Black church movement* in Britain from the struggles of *the Black community* in the early 1950s and 1960s. The second is that perennial mono-causal mythology which explains the rise of the Black Majority churches as a consequence of racism and rejection. To sustain the latter tendency would, according to Bishop Joe Aldred of the Church of God of Prophecy, undermine, 'undervalue' and ghettoise the emergence of the Black Majority churches.[34] Such an interpretation would, of course, make what Bishop Wilfred Wood of Croydon once called this new and 'most remarkable' recent development on the 'Christian scene in Britain' a community by default.

As an integral part of the Caribbean community in Britain, black Christians were not *excluded* from the chilly reception from the host community or the discrimination suffered by their compatriots, as Bishop Lyseight recognised. However, it also acknowledges the historical and theological roots of the Black Majority churches beyond their formation in Britain in the 1950s.[35]

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[34] See his "The Rise of the Black Majority Churches in Britain: A Response to White Racism or an Expression of Missionary Zeal?", 1997. Conference Paper delivered at the University of North London; Carol Tomlin, *Black Preaching Style* (M.Phil. dissertation, Birmingham University, 1988), pp.21-25; Herman Browne, 'The Sociological and Theological Significance of the Black Church Traditions in Contemporary British Society', Lecture delivered at Nottingham Trent University, May, 1996.

[35] See Dayton's The Historical and Theological Roots of Pentecostalism. The New Testament Church of God has its roots in the Church of God, Cleveland, in the USA. The Church of God of Prophecy (CGP), a sister church of the organisation, was formed in 1923. In the UK there is close co-operation between CGP and NTCG. The historical development of the Church of God is comprehensively covered in Charles W Conn's Like A Mighty Wind: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1976, Tennessee, Pathway Press:1977. This official history of the Church of God has manifold shortcomings: it is ethnocentric and it fails to recognise the pioneering contribution made to the development of Pentecostalism in the Caribbean by the black missionary, Edmund Barr. In regard to one of the most critical periods in US history, the Civil Rights Movement, Conn almost chooses to pass over it in silence. This issue is dealt with in chapters 4 and 5 below.

The recollections of Bishop Lyseight, like that of Bishop Dunn of the First United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic), contextualise the experience of Black Pentecostals in Britain in the early 1950s when the Black community were struggling for acceptance in their colonial 'Motherland':

> From January 1952 to September 1953, we were evangelising in many churches in England, both in the mainstream, and the white Pentecostal churches. During this period, we learned a lot about Britain, and the experiences we encountered prepared us for the task ahead...We ministered to thousands of people. However, with all the successes we were having we still were not satisfied to be ministering only to the native population, while some of our own people were drifting away and backsliding as they poured into the country as strangers, unaccustomed to the ways of Britain. Some of them were despised and made to feel unwelcome by some of the main-line churches. We saw their plight, and then decided to try to put the situation right. When we decided to start up the work— just to have a fellowship and somewhere to worship— where our people from the Caribbean could attend freely and feel welcome; we suffered many adversities. Nobody scarcely would take us in or give us rented accommodation. Many doors were slammed in our faces. We suffered many insults, and those without the grace of God were prepared to resort to violence. But we showed that there was a better way to overcome these trials, and that was through the power of God.[36]

Some two decades after the initial work of Calley and Hill, and a decade after the publication of Hollenweger's *The Pentecostals*, black British Pentecostals began articulating their history, experience and self-understanding in a variety of forms and media. Through oral mediation[37] and various forms of academic and quasi-academic writings, clerical and academic insiders,[38] and sympathetic outsiders,[39] presented an analysis of

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36 Dr Oliver Lyseight, Forward March: An Autobiography, Birches Printers Ltd.:West Midlands, 1995, pp. 34-36.

37 See Catching Both Sides of the Wind. In series of interviews Pentecostal leader Ira Brooks tells of his religious experience and his journey into the New Testament Church.

38 See Carol Tomlin, op. cit.; J. Edwards (ed), Let's Praise Again: An African Caribbean Perspective on Worship, Kingsway Publication: 1992; Philip Mohabir, Building Bridges.

Pentecostalism informed by the 'grass roots' - a view of Pentecostalism which was informed by black British Pentecostals and their 'theological' reflections.

Traditions and experiences of transcendence were now meeting each other or in conversation both in the churches and various theological institutions established to promote dialogue and a meeting place (as opposed to a 'melting pot') for 'oral' and 'literate' forms of religious and theological traditions[40] Pentecostals were beginning to tell 'their story',[41] reflect upon the traditions, doctrines and institutions of their faith community. This period marked the beginnings of a new phase in British Pentecostal research: it signalled both the end of the theological surrogacy[42] that informed British Black Pentecostal research and the

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[39] This group of 'outsiders' include Roswith Gerloff and Patrick kalilombe from the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership (CBWCP), John Root, Encountering West Indian Pentecostalism: its Ministry & Worship, Nottingham, Grove Books: 1979 (In the Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship series, No. 66), Ian MacRobert (*Black Pentecostalism: Its Origins, Functions and Theology*. Ph.D Thesis: Birmingham University, 1989).

[40] The curriculum of CBWCP, founded and pioneered by Roswith Gerloff, and the Simon of Cyrene Theological Institute were seen as exemplary paradigms to engender theological and interdenominational dialogue.

[41] The ability to tell your "story" in a language authenticated by your religious experience is anthropologically and ideologically important. Black Pentecostal encounters and story-telling in the theological discourse and curriculum performs a critical function in challenging the hegemony of traditional theological norms and sources. According to James Cone, there is a "dialectical encounter" in the story of black religion and its mediation in the "personal story". This mediation and dialectical encounter democratises and qualitatively equalises the theological encounter, allowing divergent traditions to break the bread of Christian experience together and to *listen* to one another. "Indeed", says Cone, "it is when we refuse to *listen to another story* that our own story becomes ideological, that is, a closed system incapable of hearing the truth." (God of the Oppressed, p.104.)

[42] Theological surrogacy is defined thus: the colonisation of a field and sphere of academic activity, research on a subject or group of which the activity originator is not a member or and insider. According to Godfrey Brandt, surrogacy has a material base: those who engage in the process are usually beneficiaries of the fruits and apparatus of the dominant social class. Relationships of wealth and power are critical factors in this process, as they are in institutional and theological relations between the churches. Elaine Foster argues: "White-led historical churches, on the whole, tend to be arrogant about their history, their speculative theologies, their wealth, their power and their label of 'church' rather than 'sect'. See her "Out of this World: a consideration of the development and nature of the Black-led churches in Britain" in Paul Grant and Raj Patel (ed), A Time to Speak, p.70.

emergence of a corpus of literature on British black religious experience and theologizing from the perspective of the 'insiders'.

1.3 The New Testament Church of God in Britain: Roots and Routes

The New Testament Church of God (NTCG) in the UK is the daughter organisation of the Church of God (ChG), Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. The Church of God, with its headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, is one of the oldest and largest Pentecostal organisations in the world.[43] The Church was instituted under the name Christian Union on 19 August, 1886 with eight members. The new organisation was led by two Baptist preachers, Richard G. Spurling and his son, Richard G. Spurling Jr. Disillusioned with the social norms of their day and with religion as ritual, the new group wanted to escape man-made creeds and traditions. The original compact at the first meeting of this small group is recorded thus:

> As many Christians as are here present that are desirous to be free from all man-made creeds and traditions, and are willing to take the New Testament, or law of Christ, for your only rule of faith and practice; giving each other equal rights and privilege to read and interpret for yourselves as your conscience may dictate, and are willing to sit together as the Church of God to transact business as the same, come forward.[44]

The Holiness roots of the Church of God is recognised in its change of title between 1902 –1907: the name of the organisation was changed from the *Christian Union* to *The* Holiness *Church* in 1902; and in 1907 the designation Church of God was officially adopted.[45] From 1907 to

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43 See Charles W. Conn, 'Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)' in DPCM, pp.197-202.
44 L. Howard Juillerat, Book of Minutes, Cleveland, Tennessee, Church of God Publishing House:1922, p.8, quoted in Charles W. Conn, Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1976, Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press:1977, p.8.
45 See Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, pp.47-62.

1923 the Church of God was led by Ambrose J. Tomlinson, the first General Overseer. Under his early leadership, congregations were established in Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Virginia and the Bahamas. In the decade between 1910 and 1920, the Church grew from 1,005 members to 15,051, with a small section of the worldwide membership coming from the Caribbean.[46]

Caribbean membership of the Church of God began with the Barrs from Bahama. Edmond S. Barr and his wife, Rebecca, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during a camp meeting in Pleasant Grove, Florida conducted by Tomlinson. A few years later Tomlinson commissioned Barr to work in the Caribbean as a missionary. This historic ordination of the first Black person in the Church is recorded in Tomlinson's diary:

> June 4. Tuesday Morning. Had a conference meeting yesterday to consider the question of ordaining Edmond Barr (colored) and setting the colored people off to work among themselves on account of the race prejudice in the South... The ordination service followed, and God wonderfully blessed and honored the the work as we ordained the colored brother.[47]

The pioneering work of Edmond Barr in the Caribbean laid the historical foundations for the development of the Church of God in Jamaica and the formation of the New Testament Church of God in Britain amongst the post-Windrush Caribbean community. In 1917, the Church of God took into its organization four churches and around eighty members in Jamaica under the leadership of J.A. Joseph of Bridgetown, Barbados.

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46 See Charles W. Conn, Like A Mighty Army, Table 41, pp.430-432.
47 A. J. Tomlinson, Journal of Happenings, 5 Volumes, 1901-1923. Original Manuscript from the Hal Bernard Dixon, Jr., Pentecostal Research Center, Cleveland, TN. Entry for 4 June, 1912.

Dr. Selwyn E Arnold, National Overseer 1984-1994.

Three years later the membership of the Jamaican church had almost tripled its membership.[48] The early twentieth century roots of the Church of God in Jamaica is significant for Bishop Selwyn E. Arnold of the NTCG:

> It has often been argued that the new Testament Church of God and other Black-led churches were formed in this country because of the racism that the Black community experienced from host Churches. While the racism and rejection of some mainline Churches may have added opportunity for the spread of the movement, it must be clearly understood that most of these Black-led Churches and the New Testament Church of God in particular, were branches of organisations already existing in other parts of the world...It can, therefore, be clearly seen that the New Testament Church of God did not just spring up in the United Kingdom as a result of rejection; it was a divinely led mission to this land.[49]

The New Testament Church of God was established in 1953. Its first public meeting was conducted in a rented YMCA hall in Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, with seven members.[50] Dr Oliver A. Lyseight from Jamaica became the first Overseer in 1953. By 1961 there were 25 NTCG churches with approximately 900 members. In 1980, NTCG membership had increased to 6000 with 90 churches, rising to over 10,000 members in 2000 in the UK. The international Church of God membership stood at 1,474,090 in 1984, with just over 30 per cent (500,894) from the USA. This percentage is now significantly lower. The new demographics of Church of God membership in 2000 illustrate this. With a total membership of 5,766,680 the USA membership is now less than 20

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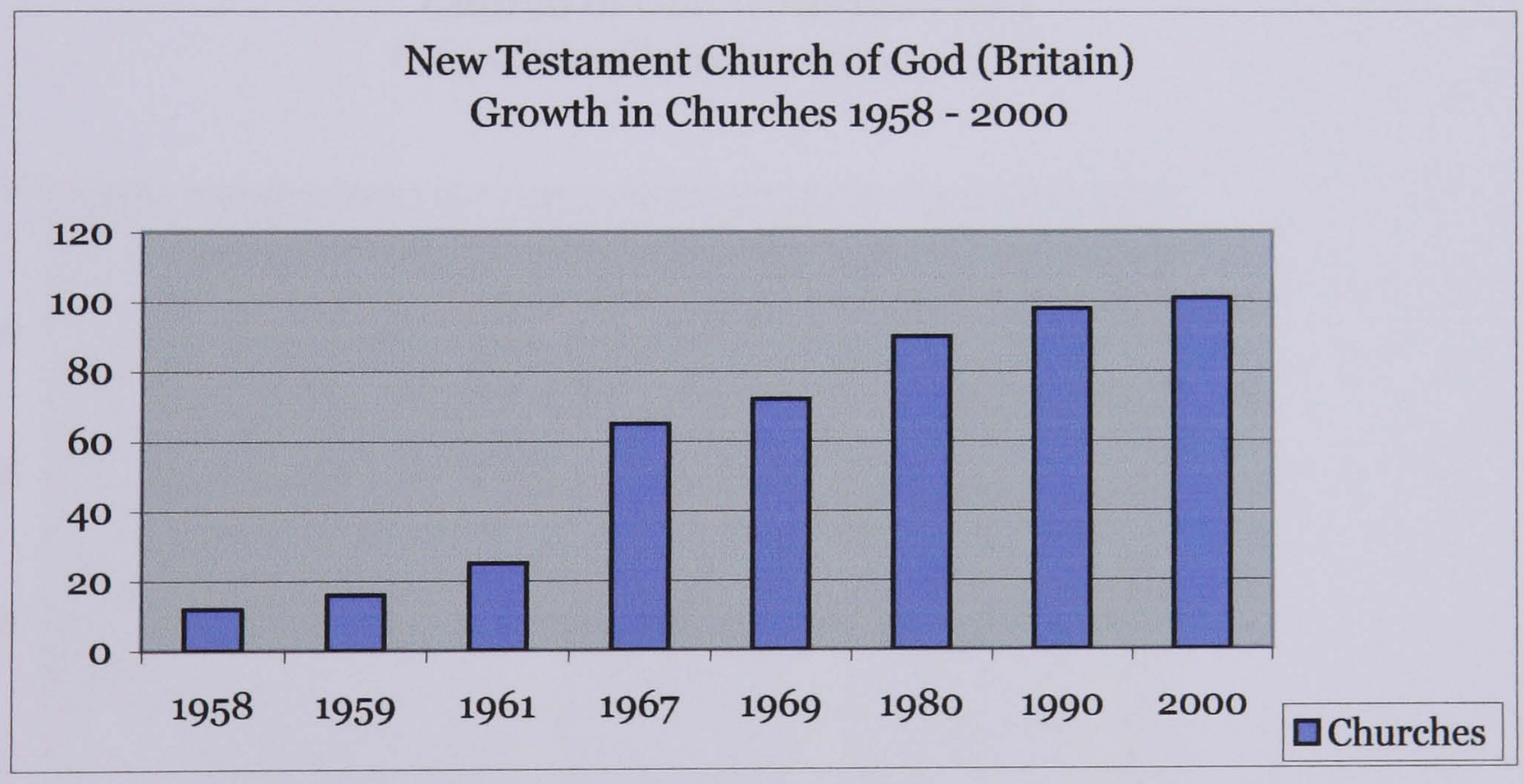
[48] Charles W. Conn, op. cit., pp. 144-145. Conn states that there were seven churches with 232 members. With a total of 312 members in nineteen churches in the Bahamas, there were over 500 members of the Church of God in the Caribbean.
[49] S.E. Arnold, From Scepticism to Hope: One Black-Led Church's Response to Social Responsibility, Nottingham, Grove Books Ltd.:1992, pp.23-23.
[50] See Ira Brooks, 'Where Do We Go From Here?' A History of 25 Years of the New Testament Church of God in the United Kingdom—1955-1980, London, Charles Raper:1982, p. The seven members at the first meeting were: Reverend Oliver A. Lyseight and Mrs Rose Lyseight, Mr and Mrs Brown, Sister C. Salmon, Brother Peddie and C. Dundas. See Oliver A. Lyseight, Forward march: An Autobiography, West Midlands, Birches Printers:1995, p.36.

percent (887,148). This provides another context for understanding, as shall be discussed in chapters four and five, aspects of the argument over the last two decades for greater equality and representation of Blacks and other 'non-Anglos' on the Church of God Executive Council, and the Council of Eighteen, in pursuit of the Church's commitment to the 'international' character of the Church of God.[51]

New Testament Church of God (Britain) Growth 1958-2000		
	Churches	Membership
1958	12	373
1959	16	501
1961	25	900
1967	65	3,000
1969	72	3,522
1980	90	6,000
1990	98	7,000
2000	101	9,368

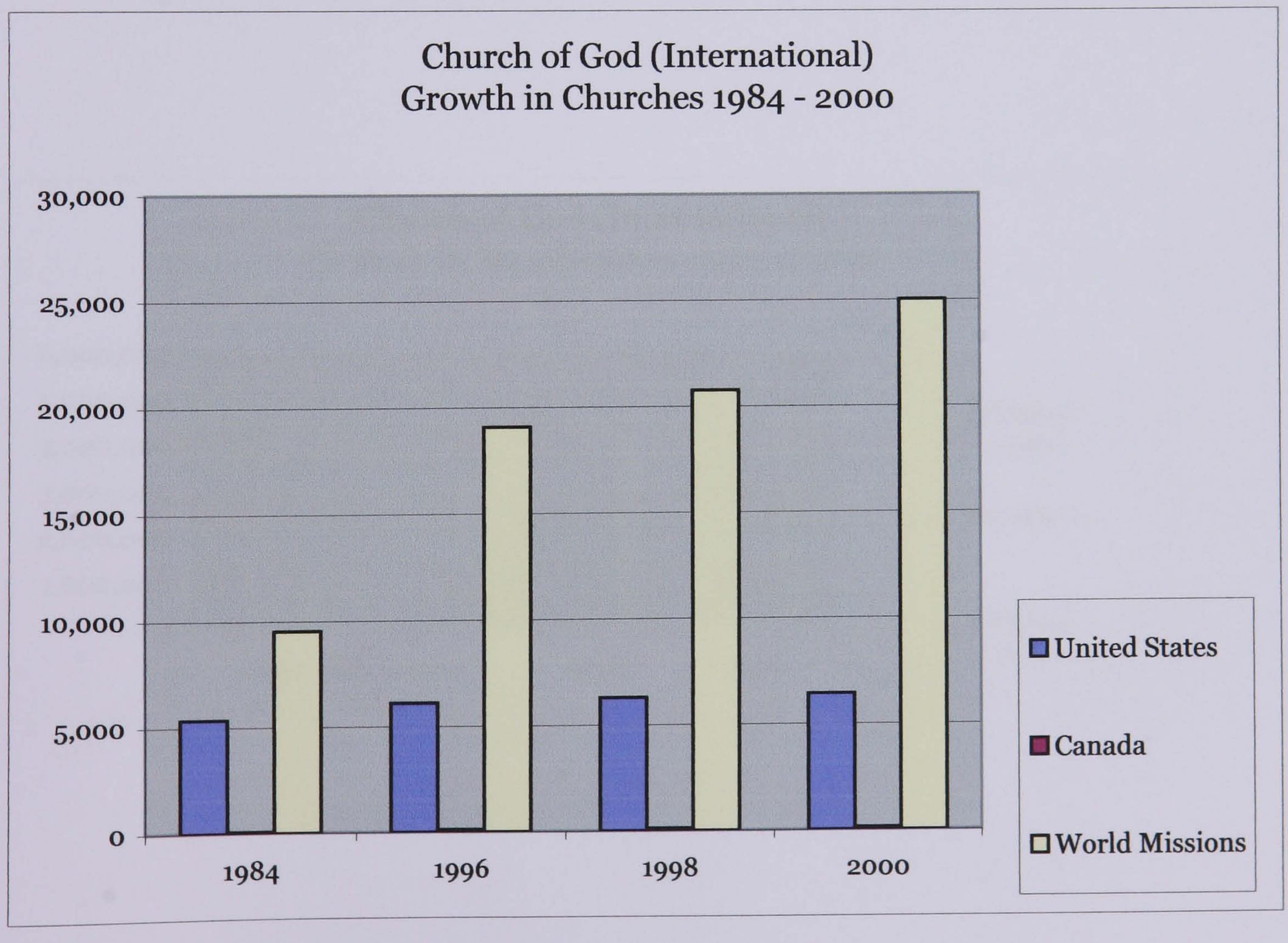
[51] See Minutes of the 60th General Assembly of the Church of God, 1984, pp.104-105; Minutes of the 68th General Assembly of the Church of God, 2000, Millennium Edition, p.331.


New Testament Church of God (Britain)
Growth in Membership 1958 - 2000
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
1958
1959
1961
1967
1969
1980
1990
2000
Membership


New Testament Church of God (Britain)
Growth in Churches 1958 - 2000
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1958
1959
1961
1967
1969
1980
1990
2000
Churches

Church of God (International)
Growth in Churches 1984 - 2000

	1984	1996	1998	2000
United States	5,353	6,101	6,271	6,408
Canada	74	118	124	127
World Missions	9,532	19,066	20,746	25,025
Total	14,959	25,285	27,141	31,560



Church of God (International)
Growth in Membership 1984 - 2000

	1984	1996	1998	2000
United States	500,894	773,483	831,248	887,148
Canada	3,837	9,246	10,091	10,687
World Missions	969,359	3,316,000	4,150,873	4,868,845
Total	1,474,090	4,098,729	4,992,212	5,766,680

1.4 Issues of Race Relations and Institutional Separation of Black and White Churches

The Church of God historically has been a 'racially segregated institution due to its Southern origin',[52] influencing organizational developments in and the struggle for equality in Church of God polity and ministry. This segregated legacy is summarized by Shalane Sheley:

> The Church of God (headquarters in Cleveland, TN) was founded in 1886 in the mountains of Tennessee. From its birth, the Church incorporated (and continued the practice of) the societal norm of segregation in its operations (but not in doctrine). One hundred years later, changes have evolved it into an organization that integrates Blacks (again as a societal norm) into numerous areas. Yet many local churches continue to hold on to negative attitudes toward Blacks who usually do not worship in neighboring Churches of God.[53]

The official separation of black and white congregations, agreed by the 1922 General Assembly,[54] had set the scene in the past for the Church of God 'Colored Work' to convene their own Annual Assembly. This was later granted by the Executive, with the restriction that the white General Overseer of the Church of God be allowed to attend.[55] Although some black members were unhappy with this accommodationist organisational apartheid, Crews contends that the provision for the attendance of the white General Overseer 'was done to keep the black church under the supervision of the white dominated government of the Church of God'.[56]

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[52] Shalane J. Sheley, *The Role of the Local Pastor in Church racial Integration: A Study of the Church of God* (MA Dissertation, Eastern Michigan University, December 1988), p.iv.
[53] Ibid., pp.1-2.
[54] Black congregations remained under the supervision of black Overseers from 1922-1958.
[55] See Church of God Minutes of the 17th General Assembly.
[56] Mickey Crews, The Church of God: A Social History, Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, pp.166.

In 1958, the Cleveland oligarchy had imposed a similar type of black-white hegemony with its racial and cultural overtones. Without proper consultation with the black leadership, or due consideration of the internal/external cultural and political implications, a new leadership was imposed upon the 'black sections' of the Church of God. The black Overseer of the 'Colored Work', W. L. Ford, was removed from office; his replacement was the white Overseer, J. T. Roberts.[57] The admixture of *cultural* politics and *church* politics at a critical period of American social and political history contributed to this defining event in Church of God race relations. Like the argument for the establishment of the white 'Metro' church in the UK on the grounds that sufficient progress were not being made by blacks in reaching 'the natives', the Cleveland oligarchs concluded that the 'nagging concern' about the 'comparative lack of growth among the blacks'[58] in the US warranted the transfer of leadership from black to white.

This crisis in the *cultural* politics and *church* 'politics' of the Church of God, especially at the time of one of the greatest social and political upheavals in America, is characteristic of the political insensitivity/arrogance, or political naivety, of Church of God leadership to the legitimate and historic concerns of its black members. Furthermore, Conn's historical treatment appears to sanitise the impact

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57 Joseph E. Jackson, Reclaiming Our Heritage: The Search for Black History in the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, Church of God Black Ministries:1993, pp.42-43; Wallace J. Sibley, 'Black Heritage of the Church of God', Paper Deliveed at the *Unity of the Spirit* Black Ministers' Conference, Lee College, April 1996, p3 ; Mickey Crews, op. cit., pp.165-168.

58 See Mickey Crews, op. cit., p.167; Charles Conn, Like A Mighty Army, pp.311-312; Joseph Jackson, op. cit., p.43.

this imposition of a white Overseer had on the morale and psyche of those present at the 1958 National Assembly of the 'Colored Work'.

Again in 1965, with racial tensions at its height in Southern states of the US, the Cleveland oligarchs imposed another white 'Overseer', David L. Lemmons, on the black churches against their wishes.[59] Three decades after the momentous event of General Overseer Wade Horton announcing the imposition of another white 'Overseer' of the 'Colored Work', it still constitutes a critical moment in the collective memory and political consciousness of ministers who lived through the event. Sibley, as one of those present at the 1965 National Assembly says:

> Unfortunately, Ford was succeeded by Bishop J.T. Roberts, (White Minister), who did well for a few years, but resigned after about seven years due to the pressures he encountered from the black ministers during those turbulent years (the fifties and sixties). At the National Assembly (1965), the General Overseer appointed another white minister to serve as the National Overseer. Before the General Overseer sat down from making this appointment, the black ministers verbally rebelled. Yours truly was present at this National Assembly...This dispute caused much introspection in the hearts and minds of the black leaders across the United States, many...left the Church of God, not ever to return. This Assembly eventually became the last National Assembly for the colored work.[60]

The controversy surrounding the last National Assembly of the 'Colored Work' in America was a defining moment in black Church of God consciousness, sowing the seeds of discord and engendering a black hermeneutic of suspicion concerning the sincerity of white leadership towards equality in Church of God ministry. The decision to impose white leadership on black congregations also served to demystify the political

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59 Crews, op. cit., pp.167-168.
60 Wallace J. Sibley, op. cit., p.3.

and power-relations in the organisation, disclosing the spiritual and ecclesiastical subordination of 'black saints' in the Church of God.

Although Conn cites the 1958 incident, there is no mention of the 1965 momentous event in the history of the 'Colored Work'; and what the official historian of the church says about the former incident appears to pass over it as incidental, merely business as usual and as a way of 'increasing black vigor and involvement in general church outreach'. Ironically, given the admission that there was very 'little contact between the two races', the Cleveland oligarchy decided that the best way to deal with the lack of 'black vigor' was to impose a white leadership on black congregations, calling it a 'bold' action.[61]

> In May 1958, the Executive Committee appointed an energetic, experienced white minister to the national overseership of the Negro churches: J.T. Roberts, pastor in Tampa and membership of the Supreme Council. This was a bold, unprecedented action; the six previous national overseers were all respected black leaders. Announcement of Robert's appointment was greeted with some question and considerable optimism among both blacks and whites.[62]

Jackson argues that the decision of Church of God oligarchs, and Conn's language of affirmation of Roberts — 'a brief new vitality' and a 'resultant sense of identity among black membership of the Church' wrought under Roberts' 'guidance and evangelistic verve' created 'new energy and motivation'[63] — had the decided effect of overlooking and downgrading the contributions of former black leaders:

> This is the kind of optimism with which the white leadership of the denomination regarded the colored work having been put in the

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61 Charles W. Conn, Like A Mighty Army, p.311.
62 Ibid. In June 1965, Roberts resigned as overseer of the black church; and despite opposition from black leaders the Executive Council decided to appoint another white minister to this top black post.
63 Conn, op. cit., p.312.

> hand of a white overseer. It seems that all success achieved under black leaders had been negated or forgotten.[64]

Notwithstanding General Overseer Morehead's announcement that black ministers had co-operated in their own spiritual and moral decline, and that he had 'high hopes for the expansion of our colored work'[65], there were voices of discontent. George A Wallace, the former black overseer, stated candidly: 'If our General Overseer and the Executive love us they will not leave this white man here.'[66] No doubt white cultural hegemony, and unequal distribution of power and prestige in the church, perpetuated what black leadership saw as the 'dark cloud of dissatisfaction' in black-white relationships in the Church of God.[67]

In 1958, black leaders acquiesced in the decision of the white leadership for the sake of maintaining harmony in the organisation, but in 1965 verbal rebellion and an exodus of blacks from the church signalled a new spiritual and political maturity to challenge white hegemony. In spite of angry protests and opposition from black ministers, the decision by the Church of God General Overseer, Wade Horton, to appoint David L. Lemons as overseer of the black churches remained unchanged. The exodus of black members in 1965 spoken of by Sibley was a moral, spiritual, and political act of resistance to racism and the *cultural* politics of white domination. The exodus from the Church of God in 1965 [68] was a function of black integrity in ministry; it was also a symbolic witness

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64 Jackson, op. cit., p.43.
65 See Church of God Evangel, July 21, 1958, p.2.; Conn, pp.311-312; Crews, pp.166-168.
66 See Church of God, Minutes of the 39th Annual Assembly of the Colored Work, p.22.
67 See Church of God, Minutes of the 30th Annual Assembly of the Colored Work, p.25.
68 See Church of God, Minutes of the 39th Annual Assembly of the Colored Work. H.A. Hawes, the National Youth and Sunday School Director argued that an entire black congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, refused to join the Church of God because it had a white Overseer. (p. 24).

similar to the courageous stance taken by Richard Allen[69] (along with Absalom Jones and others) in walking out of the Methodist Church in 1776 to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).

1.5 Black Theological Training- the Long March through the Institutions

In describing the story of the 'Black School' (i.e. the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership, Birmingham) and its attempt to facilitate a meeting place for theological education between black and white Professor Hollenweger recalls a question posed by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Birmingham:

> How is it that we have hardly any black students in our university? That is to say, we have quite a number of black students but they come from Africa, even from the United States, and our own British-born black are almost not even represented. I don't believe that they are 100 per cent unfit for higher education. There must be other reasons for this.[70]

To a large extent this paucity of black British students in higher education in general and in theological education in particular, is one of the reasons

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[69] The racist treatment of blacks at the St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia forced Allen to later form the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), laying the foundation for independent Black churches in America. See Gilbert A. Williams, The Christian Recorder, A.M.E. Church, 1854-1902, North Carolina, McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers:1996; William B Gravely, 'The Rise of African Churches in America (1786-1822): Re-examining the Contexts', in Gayraud S. Wilmore (ed), African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, Durham and London, Duke University Press:1989, pp.301-317; Carter G. Woodson, The Negro in Our History, Washington, D.C., The Associated Publishers, Inc.: 1941 (originally published in 1922), pp.143-160; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience, Durham and London, Duke University Press:1990, pp. 47-75; E. Curtis Alexander, Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education, New York, ECA Associates:1985; James Cone, God of the Oppressed. Cone argues that the courage of Allen and his companions in 1787 was 'a prophetic protest against segregated worship'. (p.31)

[70] Hollenweger, 'Interaction Between Black and White in Theological Education' unpublished paper, 1987, from CBWCP. The growing number of British black students reading theology and coming out of Birmingham University with higher degrees, including Pentecostals like Robert Beckford, Carol Tomlin and Bishop Martin Simmonds, is a testimony to the efforts and vision of people like Hollenweger, Gerloff and Kalilombe placing Pentecostal studies on the theological agenda.

why 'Black theology' is relatively underdeveloped in Britain among black insiders. This 'remarkable observation' has a great deal to do with racism, discrimination and cultural marginalization, as Hollenweger intimates:

> The reason for the lack of black British born students at the University lies in the fact that English schools have been structured for English pupils, that blacks cannot identify either with the curriculum or with their staff. Black themes are absent.[71]

A few years after Hollenweger's observations this 'catastrophic' education policy showed little signs of change in regard to theological thinking in higher education institutions as demonstrated by the 1992 CCBI Survey.[72]

The crucial role played by theological colleges in both the 'thinking and activity of the church' on the one hand, and informing public opinion on the other was recognized. While a few theological colleges were having short courses on 'racism awareness', and even flirting with titles like 'liberation theology' or 'Black Theology', the majority remained culturally insular and theologically Eurocentric:

> The great majority however, it seems from the survey, do not benefit from the kind of teaching about racism which enables them to see it as a profound social, cultural and economic influence in western society which invading the institution of the Church, is able only too easily, to render the Gospel of little effect.
>
> We believe this is an important omission, as all of us in the churches seek to prepare ourselves for ministry in a shrinking world, in which Britain and indeed Europe has become a multi-racial, multi-cultural society...There are still comparatively few students, and even few staff, in our colleges who are not of European ethnic origin. Yet an increasing proportion of the world's Christians are black, and the taste of growing churches here in Britain itself are also black.[73]

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71 Ibid.

72 See Raj Patel, et al, Equal Partners? Theological Training and Racial Justice, CCBI:1992.

73 See Rev John Reardon's Foreword in Equal Partners?

The findings of the survey illuminate both the narrow content of the courses and the small numbers of blacks entering theological institutions of higher education, even among Pentecostal colleges.[74] The cultures of black people tended to be studied and situated in 'the context of anthropology and missions studies'. And where individual colleges 'specialised in particular cultures, for example Uganda, the Masai or Indonesia', this is probably as a result of 'previous experiences of staff members'.[75] The corresponding lack of black representation, access and opportunity to exercise ministry and 'the gift of black people'[76] in the Anglican Church, was candidly acknowledged in the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas in 1985.

Recognizing that 'there are probably fewer than 100 black clergy in the Church of England, and no black staff are employed in senior posts by the Boards and Councils of the General Synod',[77] there were calls and admonitions for 'effective structural changes' and 'complementary initiatives' which would facilitate and 'create circumstances of equal access for black people to serve in all its structures'.[78] The recommendations of *Equal Partners,* and the 'clear objectives' in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Report, recognized and identified the critical functions of racism, cultural hegemony and discrimination in the construction and maintenance of 'barriers to the effective participation

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74 Ibid.,p.16.
75 Ibid.
76 See Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation (The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas), Church House, London: 1985, pp96-97.
77 Ibid., p.95.
78 Ibid., p.97.

and leadership to black people at all levels of church life, particularly in relation to the ordained ministry'.[79]

Among its chief recommendations to governing bodies of colleges— and a means of addressing what Hollenweger referred to as the 'catastrophic' higher education policy in respect of Black British-born students, and authentic theological reflections from a Black perspective— the report recommends:

> The content of courses be reviewed to ensure that courses in Biblical teaching, Church History and all other areas reflect the contribution Black and ethnic minority communities, demonstrate the cultural origins of the Christian faith, develop awareness of the nature and effects of racism and aim to develop students' skills in challenging stereotypes and institutionalised racism; this will require that all aspects of the curriculum incorporate an equal opportunities approach thus ensuring that race issues are not marginalized with either short isolated modules, occasional visiting Black speakers or short placements.[80]

1.6 Curriculum Alienation and the Experience of Black Students in Theological Institutions

Wesley Daniel's articulation of the 'two agendas' faced by a black theological student may be seen as a reminder (or a paradigm for curriculum intervention in recognition of a pedagogical problematic facing black students) of the intellectual, cultural and psychological struggles associated with Black students pursuing theological education. In many respects, the views of Daniel are reminiscent of Du Bois' 'double consciousness' and the curriculum alienation experienced by James Cone, as well as the challenge posed by the philosopher Cornel West to demystify and deconstruct the prevailing 'regimes of truth' in classical

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79 Ibid.
80 Equal Partners? p 38. The report, in many ways ahead of its time, also recommends a review of the "ethnic composition" of the student body (p.37).

Foucaultian terms.[81] Daniels represents the two theological agendas facing black student thus:

> Two agendas in the sense that there was the one set before me by the college and took little notice of who I was, and who and what I represented. The second was the one which I in turn had to turn around and set for myself in order not to lose sight of who I was.[82]

It is not surprising that Daniel's 'good friend and brother' (another black student from Namibia) became 'a very disappointed man' during their sojourn at Queen's College, Birmingham:

> He was invisible and little respect was shown to him and what he represented. He found active participation one of the most tedious tasks he had ever undertaken.[83]

According to Wilkinson, Daniel's contribution should be recognized as a landmark in the development of theological education:

> Its starting point was a description of the cost of remaining authentically Black, of remaining true to Black Roots, inheritance of faith and upbringing. It developed from that inheritance a liberative praxis, namely a detailed programme by which a neglected 'invisible' community could take its rightful place at the table of theological comprehensiveness. This process would involve pain and cost as White theology was purified and transformed by its encounter with Black theology...*both* groups of students would know themselves better, and be better equipped to minister to both communities.[84]

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[81] See bell hooks and Cornel West, Breaking Bread—Insurgent Black Intellectual Life, pp.142-146.

[82] See Appendix 7 "The Question of Race and Theological Training" in Equal Partners, p.63.

[83] Ibid. The problem of black invisibility does not only take place at the student level. As tutor in 'Black Christian Studies' at Queen's College, Birmingham, Robert Beckford relates his own struggle as a black tutor in a predominantly white theological institution. Beckford says that he had to develop a 'counter-hegemonic epistemology' to survive the white supremacist views of his colleagues at Queen's College: 'I found many colleagues unaware of the way that their cultural systems sustain, inform and perpetuate their theological beliefs and practices. For example, worship in the college chapel was for me more than an encounter with God: it was an encounter with a white middle class, patriarchal religio-cultural system. Therefore, challenging cultural presuppositions became part of the struggle against their theological norms.' (Robert Beckford, *Notes and Reflections on Black Christian Studies at Queen's College*, March 1996)

[84] John L. Wilkinson, Church in Black and White—The Black Christian Tradition in "Mainstream" Churches in England: A White Response and Testimony, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh:1993, p.167.

The struggle for black authenticity and the inclusion of a Black theological paradigm as epistemologically[85] valued appears to be a perennial challenge: it is one which resonates with the Black Diaspora experience and ontology. While theological education should, as Rev. Sonia Hicks[86] argues, 'aim to enable those who have been called to the ordained ministry to prepare themselves through study of theology, the Bible and society for the task of encouraging the church to fulfil her missions', race, culture, regimes of knowledge, and institutional arrangements often militate against black students engaged in the enterprise.

The sense of alienation engendered by the formal and paracurriculum[87] of white theological institutions inevitably creates intellectual and spiritual tensions for black students.[88] The mediation of its theological hermeneutic, epistemological priorities, received

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[85] For Beckford this means coming to terms with 'an epistemological approach that places a premium on experience as the criterion of meaning'. Beckford, op. cit., *Notes*.

[86] See Appendix 6 "Black Involvement" in Equal Partners?

[87] The paracurriculum can be defined as the "non-intellectual" values, assumptions and sentiments which enter the curriculum, informs the value and weight attached to the aspirations and cognitive perspectives of the mediators of the curriculum. The "paracurriculum" is also referred to as the "hidden curriculum" or the dual curriculum. In his classic study of the hidden curriculum Snyder argues that the "hidden curriculum" is just as important as the "formal" curriculum, *what* is learned equally important as *how* it is learned: " there is another set of less obvious tasks which bears a most interesting relationship to the formal curriculum. The question for the student is not only what he will learn but also how he will learn. These covert, inferred tasks, and the means to their mastery, are linked together in a hidden curriculum. They are rooted in the professor's assumptions and values, the students' expectations, and the social context in which both teacher and taught find themselves...the importance of the context, the emotional and social surround, of the formal curriculum." See Benson R. Synder, The Hidden Curriculum, MIT Press, Massachusetts:1970, p.4.

[88] Reflecting on his theological education Ronald Nathan says: 'How is it that many theological institutions simply avoid the whole race question as if it were taboo? At Bible school I was forever being told that my colour did not matter, but wherever I would go, in British society, I discovered that my colour was the matter. On one occasion, after having ministered at a church, I stood at the door greeting folks and overheard one lady say to another, Oh didn't he speak well for a Black man.' Nathan, 'Issues for Black Ministers', in Paul Grant and Raj Patel (ed), A Time To Speak: Perspectives of Black Christians in Britain, Birmingham, CRRU/ECRJ: 1990.

ecclesiastical traditions, creeds and liturgies[89] can be a source of alienation, creating cognitive and emotional dissonance in the student as black ontology and experience are passed over in silence. A practical solution to the problem would be to argue for 'separate' theological education systems for blacks and whites. This approach is cautioned against by Hicks; it also militates against the educational paradigm developed by Hollenweger, R. Gerloff and Patrick Kalolombie in Birmingham— the 'educational adventure of the Black and White Centre'.[90] In order to 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace',[91] Rev. Sonia Hicks argues for a moderate and judicious change in theological provision:

> I am pleading for a realisation that black ministers will have to perform their ministries in a different context to white ministers... therefore, there is a need for that context to be given some priority. At the moment, there is the realisation, in certain colleges, that blacks have a valid contribution to make to theological discourse. To make that same contribution in relation to a multi-racial church, black ministers need to prepare themselves for a different context to their white colleagues, regardless of where those black ministers perform their ministry.[92]

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89 The theological curriculum can create and perpetuate regimes and hierarchies of power, reflecting political hegemony and socio-cultural relations. In a quasi-Marxian way, the dominant theological and hermeneutical paradigms are developed by, and mediated through, the dominant theological class who occupy the positions of privilege shared by the political elites. Marx, of course, was more rigid in his articulation of this relationship, arguing that the "ruling ideas" are the ideas of the ruling class. Robert Hood poses similar questions about the hegemonic nature of Euro-centricity in Christianity and theological legitimacy. The "critical issues" for Hood is not only the "invisibility" of non Graeco-Roman religious thought and patterns in legitimating Christian thought, but the extent to which "Third World" cultures and traditions must be "filtered through Graeco-Roman religious thought and patterns in order to be considered legitimate and authentically Christian. In other words: Do Christians from Third World cultures have to become imitation Europeans or imitation North Americans before they can be considered contributors to the formation and shaping of Christian thought?" See his Must God Remain Greek? Afro Cultures and God-Talk, Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1900, pp 8-9.

90 Hollenweger, op. cit., p.346.

91 Ephesians 4:3 This Biblical injunction was given the highest priority in the modern development of the Church of God of Prophecy in the thinking of the General Overseer, Dr Murray. (Interview: April 1996, Tennessee, USA.) The "unity of the Spirit" injunction, according to Dr Murray, informed the managerial development to relocate Rev O. Williams from the UK to the US to work with the Black congregation in America.

92 Op. cit., p.61.

The experience of ministers like Hicks and Daniel can serve as salutary reminders and informing principles to those providing and planning ministerial training and theological education in a multi-cultural and pluralist society. Theology is, *ipso facto,* reflection mediated in time and space - it is a conceptual and ontological reflection and response in the contingency of cultural specificity. If this is the case— or is conceded to be a valid provisional hypothesis - then theological training in a plural society needs to be sensitive not only to the content of the theological curriculum and the *metamessages* it signifies to black students, but it also needs to be aware of the epistemological priorities and socio-historical factors which influence and determine the curriculum. There is a dialectical relationship between these two things: and any attempt to overlook them or minimize their significance under the rubric of theology as 'objective knowledge' fails to come to terms with the epistemological implausibility of objectivity in theology[93] and the critical function of 'cognitive freedom' articulated by Hick. According to Hick, our knowledge of God 'is not given to us as a compulsory perception, but is achieved as a voluntary act of interpretation'[94] which takes place in culturally specific contexts; and the pursuit of which demands that we 'exert ourselves' in what Richmond calls the 'will to know'[95].

In pursuit of theological education, black 'concerns' and perspectives are necessarily informed by race, experience, history and

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93 See James Cone, God of the Oppressed, chapter 4 and 5; Arthur Holmes, All Truth is God's Truth, p.131; Barney Pityana, "Toward a Black Theology for Britain" in A Harvey (ed), Theology in the City, SPCK, London: 1989, pp.98-100.
94 Quoted in James Richmond, Theology and Metaphysics, London, SCM Press:1970, p.82.
95 Ibid.

culture[96] - the very *norms* and *sources* utilized in theological reflection. The experience, therefore, of Sonia Hicks, Daniel, Beckford, Cone and others in predominantly white theological institutions is not only an indication of the theological alienation often faced by black students 'doing' theology in institutions operating within the eurocentric paradigm, but it is also an insight into the theological struggles and the imperative of articulating a methodological departure more homologous and authentic of the black experience of faith and encounter with Christianity.

Whilst these particular theological and methodological 'regimes of truth'[61] and epistemological power struggles continue to resonate in many higher educational institutions, there will always be a sense in which black students, and women, become 'oppositional in the academy', engaging in what Foucault called 'the insurrection of subjugated knowledges'[62] — arguing for a theological curriculum which recognises, validates and authenticates their history, existential reality and religious experience.

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[96] See Cone, A Liberation Theology (chapter 2, "The Sources and Norms of Black theology"; Dwight N Hopkins, Shoes that fit our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology, New York, Orbis Books:1993, pp.16-48.

[61] See Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf:1980.

[62] See bell hooks and Cornel West, Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life, p.32. Interestingly, Birmingham University now officially runs courses in 'Black Theology' at a time when this particular discourse may be seen by some to have outlived its usefulness. Indeed, according to Cornel West, some aspects of 'Black Theology' as liberation theology run the risk of having a 'crucial propagandistic role, but provides little, if any, intellectual depth'. See Cornel West, The Cornel West Reader, New York, Basic Vivitas Books:1999, p.395.

1.7 Black Christian Reflection: 'A Time to Write'

The writings of black Christians, sympathetic outsiders, and black Pentecostals in Britain over the last two decades articulate a new awareness and self-understanding of these religionists; they also provide insight into many of the predominant religious, theological and social concerns of the Black church as articulated by its second and third generation protagonists. The predominance of the 'oral tradition'[97] and the 'post-conversion baptism in the Holy Spirit' is still a significant characteristic of Pentecostalism; and whilst the concerns articulated in some of these writings represent an informed assessment of the experience and struggle for black Christian religious reflection, it is by no means the whole picture. For in the Black Church tradition one gets a more complete view of the vicissitudes and spiritual dynamics of black Christian life through the institution of the Sunday sermon, the 'testemoane' (testimony)[98], a 'word of exhortation' and the 'prayer of the saints'.

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97 See Hollenweger, The Pentecostals; Carol Tomlin, op. cit.; Steven J. Land, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Living in the Spirit" in Louis Dupre and Don E Jones (ed) Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern, London, SCM Press:1990.

98 In many black Pentecostal churches the democratic tradition of the 'testimony' is a time to share experiences of 'God's grace and goodness' in the lives of believers. In Mile End New Testament Church, 'Testimony time' on Sundays are integral to the church's life and liturgy. During these times, believers publicly stand or go to the front of the congregation to share their stories of 'overcoming' particular struggles and problems of daily life. Believers are encouraged to share their experience so that others can learn from it and encouraged in the light that what God has done in and through one individual He 'is more than able to do the same for you'. There are often testimonies of financial breakthrough, relationships being healed, obstacles (including people) being removed from positions of power in the work place as a result of 'the prayers of the saints'. In the Pentecostal and oral traditions, testimonies are essentially about one 'telling of what God has done for us'. Pentecostals often speak of 'overcoming the devil'—even 'shaming the devil'—with their testimony. Testimony allows the individual to 'share what God has done to encourage others to trust God' and to signal that 'I want to go on with Jesus'. Pentecostals believe, as alluded to in the book of Revelation that the saints overcome the dragon by 'the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony' (Rev 12.11).

As a *sympathetic outsider,*[99] Roswith Gerloff provides an important contribution to an understanding of the Black Church movement in Britain, as well as the Black Christian tradition in the Diaspora. Gerloff, born and educated in Germany, is an ordained minister of the United Evangelical Church. As a co-founder and former Director of the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership (CBWCP), she spent over two decades working across denominations and theological traditions to encourage dialogue and mutual theological communion amongst Black Majority churches and the white historic congregations. A significant number of black pastors and church leaders have benefited from the CBWCP experience and the theological paradigm of inter-cultural theological education.[100]

Gerloff recognises the theological and political importance of black British Christian 'insiders' articulating their reflections, experiences and traditions in oral and non-oral media. The launch of the Journal of Black Theology in Britain[101] from CBWCP in 1998 is seen as the coming of age of

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[99] As someone who has 'lived with the black church movement in Britain over the past 25 years' and speaks from 'outside as a missiologist', Gerloff's work and pastoral-theological interaction represents the sympathetic 'outsider' at their best. See her Response to Robert Beckford in Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger (ed), Pentecost after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press:1999, pp.60-66.

[100] Black church leaders like Bishop Martin Simmonds of the First United church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic) and Revd. James Stapleton of the Wesleyan Holiness Church are both graduates of CBWCP.

[101] *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* was launched in Mile End New Testament Church of God on Saturday (1998); Mile End New Testament Church also hosted the first 'Black Theology Conference' in 1991. The Journal's stated aims:

> *Black Theology in Britain* provides a forum for the articulation and expression of issues of faith among Black people in Britain. Contributors reflect on their faith in relation to African, Caribbean, American or Asian origins and other contexts relevant to Britain. The journal has academic standing while also being accessible and informative for a wider community, especially of those concerned about the particularities of Black experience in Britain. It offers carefully researched articles of use to participants in the growing number of courses on Black Studies in institutions
> higher education.

black British theology and the development of non-oral forms of black religio-cultural discourse. This does not relegate the valuable contributions and insights made by 'outsiders'. Indeed, Gerloff sees the value of both positions as essential in 'building bridges' in multi-cultural Britain and restructuring theological education:

> We have indicated the problems facing the Black Church movement in interaction with the white church and population in Britain in the last decade of this century...They are intrinsically bound up with research which is both action-orientated and geared to the benefit of those at the bottom of society. We agree that it has to come increasingly from within the Black churches themselves. But in order to build bridges to other cultures, it also needs sympathetic researchers from outside this specific community. Research is necessary for at least two reasons: an improved mutual understanding of people at the grassroots of society, and an improved intercultural education in schools, colleges, and universities. We suggest that what is urgently needed are changes in curriculum, e.g., introducing British Black Studies into theological departments and seminaries.[102]

In tracing the historical development of the Black Church movement in Britain Gerloff refers to the last of her six periods of development as that of a 'Time to Speak'.[103] This designation is informed by the publication in 1990 of a unique collection of essays by Black British Christians with the same title.[104] The eleven contributors included three women, a member from the Black Majority church and members from the older historic churches. There are intimations of a coherent articulation of

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The Journal provides:

- A forum for theological expression by Black people
- Education for church and community on Black concerns
- Religious, social and cultural information on, and critique of, the Black experience in Britain
- An avenue for the publication of research findings on Black issues
- Reviews of relevant books and other publications.

[102] Roswith Gerloff, op. cit., p.390.
[103] Ibid., pp 56-61.
[104] Paul Grant and Raj Patel (ed) A Time to Speak—Perspectives of Black Christians in Britain, ECRU/ECRJ, London:1990.

the need for Black Christians to be agents of their spiritual liberation, to be agents in the decolonisation of Black Christianity. The expressed notion of Black Christians as victims of spiritual 'colonisation' and 'the crumbling fortress of exclusive European theology'[105] indicated an awareness not only of the relationship between Christianity, slavery and colonisation, but also the interpretation of Black faith/Black Church[106] as a social and religious site/locus for the continuation of Black liberation and emancipation[107]. There is, of course, the explicit view that 'this "colonisation" of our Black hearts is no longer acceptable to us: it's time to speak for ourselves'. There is also the suggestion that the collection of essays constitute 'the first self-conscious attempt to map out a Black Theology for Britain'. In the editorial Grant and Patel state:

> 'Black Christianity' in Britain has had many exponents and apologists. Many have made their reputations and careers from 'interpreting' Black faith to different intellectuals and earnest clerics. We, the victims of this spiritual 'colonisation', have been observed and pronounced upon. We have read what has been said about us and been provoked to various reactions. Some of us have been impressed that something has been learnt, but disappointed

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[105] Ibid., p.1.

[106] The centrality of the Black Church in Black social and political history in the Licolnian sense privileges this dominant institution in *providing* and *informing* leadership and the contours of a Black liberation ethic and a political philosophy respectively. For Lincoln the Black church and the 'organising principle' around which black life was structured privileged the church as a dominant educational institution, as well as a 'political arena' for revolutionary practices and liberation discourse. (See his introduction in James Cone's, A Black Theology of Liberation). Lincoln develops this view in his Race, Religion and the Continuing American Dilemma, Hill & Wang, New York: 1984. The Black Church in America, according to Lincoln, has an important role to play in respect of race and social justice: because the Black Church have not been part of the 'inner circle', nor have benefited from the status quo to the extent that other religious groups have, they may emerge as a vital moral and spiritual authority in resolving America's race problems. This 'forced historical exclusion' of the Black Church in America raises both similar and different problems and challenges for the Black Church in Britain, creating bridges for intercultural theological education as well as barriers to wider social and political mobilisation of the Black community. Some of these issues will be explored in chapter four when we look at the Black Church and racial/social justice.

[107] See also Lewis V Baldwin, There is a Balm in Gilead—the Cultural Roots of Martin Luther King, Jr., Fortress Press, Minneapolis: 1991, (chapter 4 'Up You Mighty Race: the Black Messianic Hope', pp. 229-272); Gayraud S Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, New York, Orbis Books:1984 (chapter 4 ' The Black Church Freedom Movement' pp.74-98)

that that is where it usually stops. Others have been angered by the fact that yet again we have been the objects of exploitation for theses material, for 'street credibility' or for conscious-salving. Over the years, many of us have accepted this as the price we must pay for Christian unity. However, this 'colonisation' of our Black hearts is no, longer acceptable to us: it's time to speak for ourselves...we share the commitment to encouraging Black Christians to move away from 'thought control' and crumbling fortress of exclusive European theology and political practice. We want the space to express our understanding of God and the love of our people in whatever way we see fit. This is the first fruit of that concern, but only the first.[108]

Politically and theologically, this collection of essays served an important function. They demonstrated a new religious and social consciousness among Black British Christians in the way they perceived their experience, and the language used to articulate it. Although the contributors come from heterogeneous denominational traditions,[109] the twin themes of race and marginality have an experiential congruence amongst the writers. The two Pentecostals among them, Ronald Nathan (Elim Pentecostal) and Elaine Foster (NTCG), attempt to explain the emergence of Black-led churches and the resistance to 'black leadership' and 'Black Theology' as a function of racism in 'white-led' churches.[110]

According to Nathan, misconceptions of 'Black Theology' and the Black religious experience in some British churches implicitly compromised their Black *culture* and roles in these churches:

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[108] Op. cit., p1.
[109] The eleven contributors include David Moore (Anglican), Bishop Patrick Kalilombe (Roman Catholic), Elaine Foster (Pentecostal), Garnet Parris (Baptist) and Michael Nazir-Ali (Anglican, currently Bishop of Rochester).
[110] Elaine Foster, 'Out of this World: A Consideration of the Development and Nature of the Black-led Churches in Britain', pp. 57-70; Ronald Nathan, 'Issues for the Black Minister', pp. 11-21. Foster argues that the barrier to church unity is partly to do with 'white Christian inability to accept Black leadership'; she reinforces the argument as to what needs to be done to break down this barrier thus: '...when white Christians begin to accept that Black people have the ability to lead, then the church could rapid change.' (p.69)

> There is a temptation within some British churches to ask members of the ethnic minorities to give up their cultural baggage in order to be accepted. In other words, we must assimilate into a majority culture to be of any use to the church. There seems to be a lot in common here with the tension and conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Acts 15...So the question arises as to whether I can truly grasp the truth of the incarnation if I am trying to be someone else.[111]

Before we look at Robert Beckford's '*dread* paradigm' and theological construct to 'outline a framework for a Black political theology'[112], a brief consideration will be given to examining the contours and issues explored in this first 'self-conscious attempt to map out a Black Theology for Britain'.[113]

1.8 The Discourse on Racism & Black Christian Articulation

Racism, discrimination and marginality as features of inner city reality (inside and outside the church) link the views of Nelson,[114] Moore,[115] Kalilombe[116] and Grant.[117] Nelson shows an acute awareness of the history and policies to deal with racism and its effects on Black people in the inner-cities. She criticises the way in which the government after 1979 tried to solve the problems of the inner-cities (demographically characterised by large concentration of black and ethnic minority population) by adopting a 'free market' approach which moved away from 'social programmes to wealth creating areas'. According to Nelson, the

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[111] Nathan, op. cit., p.12.
[112] See his Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain, Darton, Longman & Todd: London, 1998, p.2.
[113] See Editorial, p.1.
[114] Clarice Tracey Nelson, 'The Churches, racism and the inner-cities', pp.3-10.
[115] David Moore, 'Through a black lens: Telling our history and understanding its significance', pp.17-21.
[116] Patrick Kalilombe, 'Race Relations in Britain: Possibilities for the future', pp.37-45.
[117] Paul Grant, 'If it happened to you, tell me, what would you do?', pp.47-56.

initiatives born out of this philosophy 'often bypassed local democratic processes and made minimal reference to the fate of Blacks in the inner-city'.[118] The role the state played in the 'articulation and reproduction of racism' is recognised as a 'hazard to black liberation' in British society. But Nelson also carries the notion of 'institutional racism'[119] into the 'mainstream churches'. She argues:

> The churches which are predominantly white are becoming aware of racism, both on society 'out there' and 'within' themselves. The churches are beginning to see that racism is all-pervasive in the dominant churches, and how this manifests itself in the absence of Black members in positions of leadership.[120]

Moore and Kalilombe, coming from different Christian religious traditions, approach the issue of racism and Black Christian marginality in Britain and the historic churches in different ways, but interestingly they articulate similar points of departure: the latter as one who, at the time of writing, is considered an 'outsider' to the lived-experience of Black Britons; and the former a trained priest and teacher[121] whose experience was shaped by the struggles and existential realities of the inner cities. Kalilombe, a former Bishop of Malawi and a newcomer to the Black

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[118] Nelson, op. cit., p.4.

[119] Since the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (The Macpherson Report) the notion of *institutional racism* has been given credence in both the lexicography of race relations discourse and normatised as a function of many dominant institutions' culture and practices. In section 6.34 of the Report 'institutional racism' is defined thus: 'The collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.' Though not altogether a new phenomenon in the lived-experience of Black people in Britain, the Macpherson definition of the phenomenon became the recognised one the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) accepted along with other leading public institutions and local authorities.

[120] Ibid.

[121] David Moore worked as an RE teacher at Tulse Hill School, one of the most challenging secondary schools in south London in the 1970s and 1980s. His parish church was a stone's throw away from the disturbances that started in Brixton and later spread to other major inner cities.

British Christian scene at the time, illustrates how an 'outsider' can function as an agent and instrument of clarification and focus. Employing the maxim of the Chewa tribe that 'It was the visitor that brought the sharp razor'[122] Kalilombe argues:

> ...in spite of the handicap of an outsider, the visitor could nevertheless contribute useful insights which might not be readily available to the involved local people. There is an obvious advantage in being able to stand aside and observe the drama from the sidelines, as it were. In the present case, however, my position is not really that of a mere by-stander. The question of racism is all too real for a person like me. Having experienced how it works in my own home continent of Africa, it is only natural that I would be especially sensitive, as a potential victim, to its usual manifestations even in new settings like those in Britain.[123]

Kalilombe recognises that racism transcends individual actions, locating itself in institutional structures and arrangements. This position is one that came to be better understood after the Civil Rights Movement in America in the 1960s, and the immediate decade after the arrival of the first wave of Caribbean migrants to Britain on the Empire Windrush.[124] Dummett and Hiro provide useful pointers to the meaning of institutional racism in Britain and particular denial mechanisms of its impact on Black and ethnic minority communities. The awareness that 'something evil' is inherent in racism, says Dummett, is often too challenging to accept, allowing many in Britain to construct cultural and psychological denial mechanisms informing their old beliefs that they are immune from this 'cloak of darkness'. Dummett argues:

> Racism in England is little understood. Even now, There are many deny its existence at all, since they are uneasily aware that it is

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[122] See his 'Race Relations in Britain: Possibilities for the future', p.37.

[123] Ibid.

[124] See Dilip Hiro, op. cit.; Clive Harris (ed), Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain, Verso, London:1993; Paul Gilroy, There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation, Unwin Hyman, London:1987.

> something evil and they cannot face the possibility of its presence close at hand. By ignoring the facts in front of us, preferring the old beliefs in which we grew up even when the facts contradict them, is a sure way to be made fools of. It is also a sure way, in our present situation, of ensuring that injustice and unhappiness in this country are going to increase.[125]

Dummett, like Hiro, indicate that religious institutions are not exempt from racism. Indeed, they often reflect the racism of society of which they are an integral part. According to Rose, research evidence from the late 1960s shows that regular churchgoers (in both the US and the UK) are 'no less inclined than the population at large to display rejecting attitudes towards coloured people'.[126] Hiro noted the early racism and hostility toward Afro-Caribbean people in July 1969 when a sculpture of Christ was unveiled at the Methodist church in Liverpool's Princes Park. Many white Liverpudlians were offended and incensed by the colour used for Christ's body – a blend of brown, orange, pink and white to represent the skin colours of West Indians, American Indians

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[125] Ann Dummett, op. cit., p.11; see especially chapter 4 'Institutional Racism'. For African and Caribbean people the educational institutions represent an important social and cultural site for group mobility and individual advancement. Racism often impedes this mobility and social equity, as the seminal Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report indicates. There is thematic and substantive resonance in the writing of Macpherson in the late 1990s and social commentators in the 1960s and 1970s. Writing in the 1970s, Dummett illustrates how institutional racism function in education and the legislative process in respect of immigration laws. ' Our present educational institutions are structured to the disadvantage of black children. Children with black faces *are not expected to do well* in our society. The highly prejudiced teacher will expect them to be failures because as black people they are sure to be stupid or lazy (pp.142-143)... Institutional racism works quietly...However, there is one English institution which works continual ...against black people, and that is our immigration laws. It is exceptional in that it is quite specifically and publicly racist, and backed by the full authority of government (p.152). On 1 October 1998 the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's (Sir Paul Condon QPM) appearance and submission to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry illustrated the philosophical and political difficulties in defining 'racism' and 'institutional racism'. The Commissioner later accepted the Macpherson definition; this definition was also adopted by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, the General Synod of the Church of England along with a host of other public institutions and voluntary organizations.

[126] See E.J.B. Rose and Associates, Colour and Citizenship, London, OUP for the Institute of Race Relations:1969, p.374.

and Europeans. The minister of the local church was threatened with murder and the burning down of his church.[127]

The relationship and interaction between the practices of individuals and communities, on the one hand, and 'the entrenched legislation of the public system', on the other hand, is important for Kalilombe precisely because it offers clarification as to what racism is and how adequate structures can be created for its elimination. For Kalilombe, defining and dealing with racism can be dealt with in two ways:

> There are two ways of dealing with racism: one negative, the other positive. The negative way is either to ignore the question altogether and act as if there was no problem, or to try to contain the situation by repressing protests or diffusing the tensions created by racism. This negative way offers no promise of a lasting harmonious community. For that, a more positive way is necessary. It consists in finding out the roots of racist conflict and then devising appropriate strategies for doing away with them. The need to turn to such a 'radical' approach comes when the negative strategies have been seen for what they are: mere palliatives that

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[127] Dilip Hiro, op. cit., p.29; see also Phillip Mason (The Burroughs Memorial Lectures, 1956), Christianity and Race, London, Lutterworth Press: 1956. The issue and ideology of aesthetic representations of Christ was highlighted in the discourse of Black religionists in the 1960s. The politics of pigmentation and representation occupies a critical site of hermeneutical struggle in Black Theology (the contestability of Black anthropology and the possibility of Black ontology as a universal theology symbol). Vincent Harding ('Black Power and the American Christ' in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone (ed) Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979) argued that the 'American Christ' posed aesthetic representational dissonance for the African-American. The 'American Christ', argued Harding, 'shamed us by his pigmentation, so obviously not our own. He condemned us for our blackness, for our flat noses, for our kinky hair, for our power of expressing emotion in singing and shouting and dancing. He was sedate, so genteel, so white. And as soon as we were able, many of us tried to be like him'. (p.37) Mason, of course, recognised the dialectics inherent in the ideology of aesthetics as it pertains to the phenomenon. Harding referred to a decade or so later as 'the picture of this pseudo-Nazarene'. Part of the solution to the ideology of aesthetics lies in what Rowan Williams refers to as the communicative power and the 'gospel's capacity for being at home in more than one cultural environment' (see his On Christian Theology, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Inc.:2000, p.xiv.). Mason concludes his 1956 Burroughs Memorial Lectures thus: 'If the view of Christianity I have tried to put before you has any meaning, every birth is an incarnation and every and every meal a sacrament. Every birth—not of Europeans only; all are revelations of the divine. And if the meaning of the Cross is really a unification of God with man in suffering, then the Man on the Cross and the child in the Crib belong to all of us. A Byzantine artist was right to draw that man with the olive complexion of the Mediterranean; we in England are right to look upon fairer skin and lighter hair; *the African, too, gazing at the Crucifix, should see himself* (emphasis added).'

> do not heal the evil, but let it fester until it becomes deadly. It is to be hoped that enough people in this country will feel that need and will have the courage to embark on an effective struggle against racism.[128]

While Kalilombe's 'outsider' perspective is at pains to 'dispel inadequate ideas about the race problem,'[129] he views the church as an important transformational institution in combating racism. As an agency of social transformation, Kalilombe sees the ecclesiastical community (i.e., the Church in its multicultural, multiethnic and multiliturgical modality) and its ideology of the Gospel message, offering both the potential and a paradigm to transfer society in respect of racism and discrimination:

> I see three main factors that make the Church vital to combating racism. First, they have the kind of people who have the potential to transform society. Second, they have in the Gospel message the ideology of guiding the struggle in the right path. And finally, they are about creating visible models of the type of society anti-racism is striving for...The churches are pictures, albeit ambiguous, of the hoped-for unity in diversity.[130]

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[128] Kalilombe, op. cit., p.41.

[129] Ibid.; see also David Edgington, Christians and Colour in Britain, London, Scripture Union:1970. Edgington argues that many of the inadequate ideas about race and immigrants living in Britain are often held by the middle classes whose views on immigrant communities are muddled and therefore prejudiced; he further asserts that 'there may well be more secret supporters of Powell's views in flourishing middleclass churches than we care to admit.' (p.102)

[130] Kalilombe, op. cit., p.43. In so far as the antiracism model is applied to Kalilombe's 'pictures' of the 'hoped-for unity in diversity' amongst the churches, Aylward Shorter's Toward a Theology of Inculturation (London, Geoffrey Chapman:1988) resonates with this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-liturgical modality, disclosing both the potential and possibility of identifying the church as a *vital* transformational institution in society when faced with racial differences. For Shorter the 'Gospel Message' which Kalilombe speaks of communicates partnership and mutuality between ethnic and denominational groups, giving the Church its social mandate and institutional paradigm to transform society and remove the Risen Christ from the monopoly of any one cultural identity and ideology. Accordingly, Shorter argues: ' The Risen Christ adopts a multiplicity of cultural identities when members of these cultures become his members through faith and Baptism.' (p.85)

1.9 Confronting the 'Dry Bones' of Black Exclusion and Marginalization

David Moore uses the narrative from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel and the 'wonderful story[131] of the valley of dry bones' to reflect upon and confront the experience of discrimination and marginality of Black Christians in the Anglican Church. The story of the valley of dry bones has particular significance as a metaphor for Black Christians in the historic churches:

1. The hand of the Lord was upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.
2. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.
3. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord God, You know."
4. Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the words of the Lord!
5. 'Thus says the Lord God to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live:
6. "I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."'"
7. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesised there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.
8. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.
9. Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath on these slain, that they may live."'"
10. So I prophesised as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.
11. Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'
12. "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.
13. "Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.
14. "I will put my Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will put you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it says the Lord.'" (Ezekiel 37:1-14, NKJV)

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131 David Moore, 'Through a Black Lens: Telling our History and Understanding its Significance' in A Time to Speak, p.17.

The imagery in Ezekiel's narrative is that of a dispossessed nation who had 'lost their hope and perceived themselves to be as good as dead'.[132] For Moore the story is important for both Black Christians 'who will remain within the Church of England', as well as wider ramifications for the various communities scattered throughout the country:

> If we apply the story to ourselves as Black Christians, worshipping in what are essentially white church structures, we can argue that we are the dry bones scattered amongst and fragmented within various inner city parishes; that through ignorance, indifference and intent, we are being left without spirit; that our strengths and needs are not being recognised by the very people with whom we come together in fellowship. As a result, the Black presence in the Church of England is in rapid decline. After many words, often empty, the institutional structures of the church have in reality turned their backs upon our presence, despite the fact that the majority of the Anglican Communion world-wide is Black.[133]

In his analysis of the Black presence in the Church of England, Moore points to the early experience of the post-Windrush migrants and the indifference and 'inhospitable atmosphere' displayed by the host churches:

> On arrival, confirmed, committed Anglicans arrived on church on Sunday morning to be met by indifferent and, in some cases, an inhospitable atmosphere. As a result many formed their own prayer groups, which laid the foundation for the growth and development of the Black-led churches over the past thirty years in

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., pp. 18-19; see also John Wilkinson, Church in Black and White, (especially chapter 8). The ineffective structures in the Church of England to respond to the needs and gifts of Black people were recognised by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas (Faith In the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation, 1985): 'Many black Christians told us that they have felt 'frozen out' of the Church of England by patrician attitudes...We have heard repeated calls for the Church of England to 'make space' for—and so better to receive the gifts of—black of Christians...the removal of barriers to the effective participation and leadership of black people at all levels of Church life, particularly in relation to the ordained ministry...the important considerations in our judgement are that any structural changes would need to be *effective* in terms of the process of management and policy implementation, and *accountable* within the Church structures and in relation to the black Anglican constituency.' (Faith in the City, pp.96-97)

> this country...the attitude that had sustained the Empire and acted as a bedrock of colonial thinking was insufficiently flexible to accommodate the reality that Black people were equal to white people and that Black believers had come as equipped and knowledgeable in the faith as any other group of Christians[134].

The identification of the formation and development of the Black-led churches with the cold reception of the host society and the historic churches alluded to by Moore is acknowledged by a number of prominent Black Pentecostal leaders, including Io Smith[135], Ira Brooks[136] and Bishop S. Dunn.[137] For Moore, the valley of dry bones depicts both the pain and the historic marginalisation of Black Anglicans and the promise of new life and hope in Christian fellowship. Moore does not lay all the blame on white Christians for the conditions that Black Christians find themselves in. Indeed, he argues that Black Christians are also responsible for their own marginalisation and isolation:

> Black people have also contributed to their own isolation, in so far as they have accepted a secondary role in the life of the Church and failed to pass on to their children their experiences of the institutions, so that they may know and benefit from the struggles of their parents.[138]

Because the climax of the narrative Moore employs focuses upon the phenomenon of new life being breathed upon, and into, the 'dry bones', he raises the question as to what must be done by Black Anglicans 'to enable ourselves to receive the breath and then be able to breath that spirit into our white brothers and sisters in Christ, so that we may sit

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134 Op. cit., p.27. Moore's thoughts are confirmed by Ira Brooks and Io Smith, two prominent Black Pentecostal leaders who were former Anglicans.
135 See Io. Smith, An Ebony Cross.
136 Ira Brooks, Another Gentleman to the Ministry.
137 Interview with Bishop Dunn (14.October 1996), published in The Christian Post, Jan 1997.
138 Op. cit., p.19.

down in equity and fellowship with each other.'[139] Flight into the Black-led churches, says Moore, 'is not the answer'; Black people 'must have the courage to speak up and stay in, rather than run away from, the situations that they face in their church settings'.[140]

In telling the story and identifying the history of the Black presence and painful experiences in white congregations, Moore believes that all can be 'liberated from feelings of guilt and denial' as well as enabling the younger generations to participate more positively:

> The story has to be told so that in its unfolding all can be liberated from the guilt and denial that surrounds our presence. The first step in that process must be the documentation of, and reflection upon, our collective experience within the structures of the Church of England. We need to identify our history and contributions within it, and ensure that these are passed on to our children so that they can understand their past, participate in the present and play an active and constructive role in their future.[141]

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[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., p.20.
[141] Ibid. p.19.

1.10 Robert Beckford and the 'Dread Thesis'—Radical Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Political Theology

Although a number of Black 'insiders', and 'outsiders', have attempted to sketch what may loosely be called a 'Black British Theology',[142] it is principally in the work of Robert Beckford that we find the fullest expression of such a theology. Some of the precursors to Beckford include Barney Pitayana[143], Ronald Nathan[144], Elaine Foster[145], Ira Brooks[146], Garnet Parris[147], Roswith Gerloff[148] and Valentina Alexander.[149] I will

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[142] The concept of 'Black Theology', four decades since it officially took root in the lexicography of Black religious communities and academic institutions, is still looked upon with suspicion in the Black Church. Nathan explains why this is the case: ' There are those who are turned off by the usage of the term "Black Theology". They presume we mean a Black God for Black folks and a White God for white folks. This, however, is not my understanding. I believe that white church-folk must come to the place where they accept that their Black counterparts have equal access to the throne of God and the thinks of God. This includes theological reflection, from where we are standing and in the light of the experiences we are facing. Of course, mistakes will be made and heresies declared, but this historically has always been the case, where there is theological debate. This debate will certainly increase with the shift in church growth patterns. Church growth analysts inform us that by the turn of the century two-thirds of all Christians will be non-white. Does this mean that the Bible is subservient to the Black experience? No! It does mean that the Bible would be understood by us within the framework of the totality of our lives. The supremacy of the Scriptures and the Lordship of Christ over His church remains intact.' Nathan, op. cit., pp.13-14. See also Maurice Hobbs, Better will Come: A Pastoral Response to Institutional racism in British Churches, Nottingham, Grove Books Ltd: 1991; Ernie P. Gordon, 'Garvey and Black Liberation Theology' in Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (ed), Garvey: His Work and Impact, Kingston, Jamaica, United Cooperative Printers: 1988, pp. 135-143; Noel Leo Erskine, Decolonising Theology: A Caribbean Perspective, New Jersey/Samara, Africa World Press: 1998 (originally published by Orbis Books, 1981).

[143] N. Barney Pityana, 'Towards a Black Theology for Britain', in Anthony Harvey (ed) Theology in the City: A Theological Response To 'Faith In The City' London, SPCK:1989.

[144] Nathan, op. cit., pp.13-25.

[145] Elaine Foster, 'Thoughts on The Black Experience in Britain', unpublished paper, 1984. Foster is a member of the NTCG. In this paper, Foster acknowledged the existence of a 'theology of liberation' in the British Black-led churches, but she argued that this theology was 'incapable of offering any practical challenge to the workings of the world because liberation is consistently construed as being experienced with the parameters of spirituality and reward deferred to the afterlife'. This 'spiritual interpretation' of liberation has its roots in 'fundamental Christian beliefs and white southern state American values'; and as such it fails to offer any resistance to racism and oppression. (pp.16-17)

[146] Ira Brooks, NTCG pastor, teacher and church historian, argued in the 1980s for a 'Black Theology' informed by Black history, culture and achievement; a theology which challenged what Brooks called 'perennial whiteness', as we shall explore in chapter 4.

[147] Parris, 'Black Theology: The US Experience, in Paul Grant and Raj Patel, op. cit., pp. 23-28.

[148] Roswith Gerloff is, undoubtedly, one of the most important 'outsider' in developing Black British theologies. Gerloff's A Plea for Black British Theologies is a culmination of

briefly explore the context, content and challenges of what is, decidedly, one of the most exciting Black theological developments to emerge in Britain.

Beckford's use of 'Black expressive cultures',[150] as well as the language, imagery, and ideology of Rastafarianism as sources for developing a Black British Pentecostal/political theology poses a number of challenging questions for Black Pentecostalism and Black Christians in Britain. There are fundamental issues of psychological dissonance, and theological incongruence, between the 'audience' for whom Beckford writes and the methodology he employs. In the introduction of *Dread and Pentecostal* Beckford says:

> This book is concerned with developing a political theology for the Black Church in Britain and finding viable context for its development and expression. The birth of the Black Christian Civic Forum in the Winter of 1998 reveals a 'wind of change' among second and third generation Black Christians: they are willing to get their hands dirty. This emerging political voice requires a critical theological support. This text, therefore, is also a challenge to the emerging Black Christian body politic. In short, it offers a

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over two decades interaction with a variety of black religious traditions. As a German, Gerloff says that she has been 'highly sensitized by the holocaust and German racist history', learning that building inter-racial bridges 'cannot happen without reckoning with the phenomenon of institutional racism, i.e., the collaboration of prejudice with power'. (pp.6-7)

[149] See her *'Breaking Every Fetter' To What Extent Has the Black-led Church in Britain Developed a Theology of Liberation?* (Ph.D, Warwick University, 1996) Alexander argues that Black-led churches (BLC) offer both community and cultural identity to its members, especially second and third generation. According to Alexander, BLCs are developing a 'liberational theology' which forms a 'contextual and holistic response to the oppressive conditions with which its members and the communities they represent are confronted'. (p.219) At the heart of Black Theology in the Churches there are, argues Alexander, two central features: a 'liberational spirituality' and a 'holistic understanding and response to the concerns of the oppressed' in the church community and the wider society. The extent to which these two elements operate in these religious communities is the extent to which the BLCs 'can be said to be engaging in a liberational theology in Britain'. (p.220)

[150] Beckford's first book (Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain, London, Darton, Longman & Todd: 1998) was a 'loose collection of essays' examining 'the ways in which the mobilisation of Black *expressive cultures* provides resources for doing Black theology...in particular, the need for an insurgent Black theology which mobilises Black Christians to think critically about their faith'. (p.17)

> theological resource for a Black Christian political theology...[151] a political theology based on 'dread Pentecostalism.[152]

The theoretical and hermeneutical framework adopted by Beckford is culturally and theologically fecund, invoking a rich and nuanced dialectic between the liberational[153] ethos of black religion and political radicalism. Essentially, Beckford's approach utilizes 'cultural theory' methodology to develop a 'political theology' to mobilize and radicalize Black British Pentecostals:

> My approach is to develop a black Christian cultural theory as a methodology for interrogating the black Christian experience—in short, to make use of aspects of black culture to radicalise black British Pentecostal church culture and theology. This is not a new phenomenon in black Christian circles. The combination of black expressive culture and the Christian gospel produced gospel music with its radical and political quality. Moreover, in recent times black Christians have *selectively* appropriated aspects of black popular culture in order to enhance and enrich black faith.[154]

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[151] Robert Beckford, Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain, London, SCM Press:2000 ('Dread and Pentecostal' was the title of Beckford's Ph.D dissertation, Birmingham University, 1999), p.1.

[152] Ibid., p.28.

[153] Robert Beckford, Dread and Pentecostal, pp.8-34, 95-130; Amy Jacques Garvey, The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey—Or Africa For the Africans, London, Frank Cass & Company: 1967. Garvey's brand of religious and political nationalism inspired post-colonial struggles and gave impetus to Rastafarianism. In his '*The Image of God*', Garvey encouraged Black people to see God 'through our own spectacles...through the spectacles of Ethiopia'. (pp.33-34) To a large extent, this particular aspect of Garveyism is the *raison d' etre* of 'Black Theology': a theology in which the predominant *source* for theologising *is* the Black experience and its historical and ontological meaning. See also James Cone, 'Black Theology as liberation Theology' in Gayraud S. Wilmore (ed), African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, Durham/London, Duke University Press:1989, pp.177-207; also Wilmore's Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People, New York, Orbis Books: 1973; Leonard Barrett, Soul-Force: African heritage in Afro American Religion, New York, Anchor Books: 1974; Dale Bisnauth, History of Religions in the Caribbean, Kingston, Kingston Publishers Ltd:1989; C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Dominago Revolution, New York, Vintage Books1963; St. Clair Drake, The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion, Chicago, Third World Press: 1970. Drake, of course, links the religious discourse of Ethiopianism and one of its formidable intellectuals, Edward Wilmot Blyden (pp.54-70) with the Garveyism and modern Pan-Africanism.

[154] Robert Beckford, 'Black Pentecostals and Black Politics' in Allan H. Anderson and Walter Hollenweger (ed), Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press: 1999, p.51. It is critical to understand the relationship between Beckford's cultural appropriation methodology and 'Pentecostal' doctrine and theology: the fundamental problem—Beckford's hermeneutical *cul-de-sac*— in so far as it relates to Black Pentecostalism, is *not* that

The ancestral pedigree of Beckford's *Dread* thesis are partly informed by defining moments in Black diasporian history and experience, especially 'New World' slavery and its creation and perpetuation of the psychology of the 'plantation complex'[155] and the 'politics of moral orders'[156] informing Caribbean socio-racial hierarchy, morality and religious discourse.

The historical relationship between Pentecostalism and Rastafarianism in Jamaica is critically explored by Austin-Broos[157] who sees Rastafarianism cast as 'the critical religion in the face of Pentecostal hegemony'.[158] Austin-Broos shows how the 'shared cultural logic' and ritual practice that positions these two religions in Jamaican society are mediated by issues of race, resistance, black exclusivity and transcendence. In the case of the latter, Austin-Broos argues that 'Rastafarian transcendence suggests more of Sartrean existentialism than Christianity as such'.[159] In the context of Beckford's *Dread*[160] theology, and the Pentecostal distinctive of *glossolalia,* Austin-Broos draws an interesting 'parallel' between the Rastafarian commitment to ganga (marijuana) smoking and Selassie, and Pentecostal ideas of speaking in tongues and commitment to the Holy Ghost and God. Drawing upon the

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there is cultural appropriation of 'aspects' of black expressive cultures, it is rather the *Rastafarian aspect* of this genre that is privileged in Beckford's Black political/Pentecostal theology. Herein lie the psychological and, consequently, the theological dissonance in the 'dread' *and* Pentecostal thesis.

155 Philip D. Curtin, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex—Essays in Atlantic History, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1990; Hugh Thomas, The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870, London, Papermac:1998; Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaves Made: Two Essays in Interpretation, New York, Vintage Books:1971.

156 Diane J. Austin-Broos, Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders, Chicago, University of Chicago Press:1997.

157 Ibid., pp.239-241.

158 Ibid., p.239.

159 Ibid., 240.

160 Dread and Pentecostal, p. 161.

work of Chevannes, Austin-Broos sees these commitments as points at which Rasta and Pentecostal practitioners 'cross the threshold separating the righteous and the saved from the unrighteous and the damned'.[161]

In both *Jesus is Dread* and *Dread and Pentecostal,* Rastafarian culture is recognised by Beckford as a major phenomenon that affected black youth in Britain and elsewhere.[162] Gilroy, Dennis and Cashmore show ways in which this sub-culture/counterculture informed and influenced Black British culture and the 'politics of resistance'.[163] There where also negative images and religious connotations of Rastafarianism in the minds of the older Caribbeans, as Beckford recognized:

> I am a Black Pentecostal Christian in Britain today and seriously concerned with Black liberation. Whereas for many of my parents' generation, Christianity and Black politics were two separate realities, for me they are inseparable. Nowhere was the dichotomy between politics and religion more apparent for many of my parents' generation than in their dislike of Rastafari. Many of my parents' generation considered Rasta politics 'anti-Christian' and 'rebellious', and Rastas 'dirty'.[164]

Ferdinand Dennis makes a similar point, but places this generational argument in a broader socio-political context as a search for 'blackness':

> Equally disturbing to older West Indians was the conduct of their British-born children. Rejected by a Britishness which excluded

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[161] Ibid.; Barry Chevannes, Rastafari: Roots and Ideology, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press: 1994, p.219;

[162] See Barry Chevannes, 'Rastafari and the Exorcism of the Ideology of Racism and Classism' in Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, et al., Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader, Kingston, Ian Randle Publisher: 1998; Peter B. Clarke, Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement, Wellingborough, Aquarian Press:1986; Leonard E. Barrett, Sr., The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance, Boston, Massachusetts, Beacon Press: 1988 (revised edition); Len Garrison, Black Youth, Rastafarianism, and the Identity Crisis in Britain, London, ACER:nd. For Garrison, it was the 'idealism' of Rastafarianism that attracted Black youths in Britain. He states: ' Ras Tafari idealism has become a popular sub-culture among black youth in Britain. As manifested here it can be described as a continuation of the functional aspects of the Jamaican movement. It is providing a basic tool in the process of reintegration of the self and social adjustment.' (p.09); Joseph Owens, Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica, London, Heinemann: 1979.

[163] See Paul Gilroy, op. cit., p.187.

[164] Jesus is Dread, p. 1.

> blacks, the first generation of Afro-Britons retreated into a blackness which rejected Britain. That blackness was Rastafarianism. Back in Jamaica, Rastas were the outcast, the dregs, the insane of society. To see their children embrace this apparently bizarre cult drove many older West Indians to distraction.[165]

Undoubtedly, part of Beckford's aim is to rehabilitate Rasta ideology and iconography for Black Pentecostals and Black Christians as a theological resource to aid them in their struggles and quest for Black identity. Notwithstanding, the manifold 'difficulties' with this type of theological rehabilitation, Beckford ultimately wants Black Pentecostal churches to turn to Rastafarianism as a focus for politicisation and mobilization. In privileging a Rastafarian 'theo-cultural focus', the essence and logic of Beckford's *Dread* hermeneutic is disclosed:

> Rastafarianism represents the first attempt to construct a liberation theology in African Caribbean history. For African Caribbean people it is an important resource, because there is no other contemporary African Caribbean religious tradition in Britain that embraces Black identity, politics and struggle. Second, some aspects of Rastafari's theological method resonate with Black Pentecostals...they both share epistemological roots in the Myal-Obeah complex. Also, a primary resource for both traditions is the Christian scriptures. Hence, there are sufficient grounds for turning to Rastafari to find a theo-cultural focus for politicising African Caribbean Christianity as found in Black Pentecostal Churches. However, I am not suggesting that the Black Church accept Rastafari uncritically. There are numerous difficulties for Black Christians. The use of the 'holy herb' and the idea of the deity of Selassie, are but two of the many social and theological objections for Black Christians in Britain. But a critical

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165 Ferdinand Dennis, 'Birmingham: Blades of Frustration', in Kwesi Owusu (ed), Black British Culture & Society: A Text Reader, London, Routledge:2000, p.187; see also Ernest Cashmore, Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England, London, Unwin Paperbacks: 1983. Cashmore argues that the drift to Ras Tafari was a 'creative response to confusion within the second-generation West Indian community', as well as a quest for Black solidarity: 'After experiencing difficulty and anxiety in trying to make satisfactory sense of what were considered to be important matters of existence, they turned to the comprehensive world view of Rasta where they found fulfilments of their need for an understanding of the world and their place in that world, as well as a vehicle for mobilising sentiments and reinforcing black solidarity.' (p.69)

> appropriation of aspects of Rastafari can provide a theo-political catalyst for Black Pentecostals in Britain.[166]

The notion that only Rastafarianism embraces 'Black identity, politics and struggle' is a false one, predicated on a rather narrow and arbitrary definition of these concepts and a misreading of what Black religious groups like the Nation of Islam and the African Revivalists are doing in Britain. It also fails to recognise alternative forms of 'politics' and cultural 'struggles' taking place in many Black Pentecostal churches.

Although very few Pentecostals would find 'sufficient grounds' in Beckford's Dread hermeneutics to turn to Rastafarianism for 'theo-cultural' inspiration for politicisation, a sympathetic, albeit brief and uncritical, treatment of Rastafarianism was offered by Elaine Foster. In Foster there is syncreticism: an admixture of Black Christian nationalism which embraces the 'divine identity' of Haile Selassie; a view of Black people as the 'true Israel'; and an undifferentiated theo-cultural appropriation which countenances no biblical or theological contradiction in arguing for the 'veracity of Jesus' and the ideology of Rastafarianism are all present in this treatment. Foster states:

> The ever present God as experienced by Ras Tafari has chosen to reveal himself in the 'present' day Haile Selassie...Jah Rastafari is 'ever living' as Rastafari is a divine identity running through one generation and the next...Rastafari can be traced through Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and Haile Selassie and promotes rather than demotes the veracity of Jesus. Jah lives! Jah lives not in the heavens somewhere but in the present experiences of Rasta. Biblical accounts of the people of Israel is but the true experiences of Black people, the true Israel. It is, however, only through reasoning and understanding the scriptures that an interpretation of events can be seen as alive and cyclical and as the work of Jah Rastafari in the lives of Jah's people.[167]

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166 Dread and Pentecostal, pp. 160-161.

167 E. Foster, op. cit., p.14.

1.11 Rasta Ideology and Pentecostal Theology—The Logic of Interpretive Dissonance

The *Dread* Thesis, and its appropriation of Rastafarian ideology/theology to politically mobilise the Black Church, constitute both a theological and biblical problematic for Black British Pentecostals, as well as an intellectual one. Pentecostals may argue that the central tenets of Beckford's thesis are theologically and biblically unsound. Intellectually, it could be interpreted as *marginal,* at best, and unbiblical[168], at worst, in religious communities which are interpretively characterised as 'conservative' and evangelical. The multi-layered hermeneutics and the manifold methodological suggestions, partly, render Beckford's work inaccessible to the purported audience for his theologising, namely, the Black Churches. An analogy of the multi-layered hermeneutics, and the critical theological imagination displayed in Beckford's work, as it relates to the broader Pentecostal constituency, could be made by way of Erasmus' criticisms of the subtleties of 'scholastic argument' of the Ockhamists, Scotists and others:

> Such is the erudition and complexity they all display that I fancy the apostles themselves would need the help of another holy spirit

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168 In Jesus is Dread, Beckford posits Bob Marley as a 'black liberation theologian' after qualifying what 'theology' and this designation might mean in Tillichian terms. Beckford argues that Marley, as liberation theologian, is committed to 'radical social transformation', 'non-cooperation with the system', and 'psychological liberation' with the poor and the oppressed. (pp.117-120). The use of Marley's *Get up Stand Up* on his *Burnin'* album is of particular theological and biblical interest for Pentecostals. Here Marley says: 'If you know what life was worth, you would fight for yours on earth.' This understanding of the need for oppressed communities to fight for 'this worldly' status and rights is congruent with the liberation ethos of black religion. The problem for Pentecostals is the sentiments in the subsequent lyrics of the song: 'We *know* and we understand, the Mighty God is a living man.' The divine status attributed to Haile Selassie in Rastafarian ideology will always be deemed as objectionable and unbiblical in Pentecostal theology. Beckford recognises what he calls the 'negative ideologies in Marley's canon' (p.125), but there is no serious attempt to resolve this and its implications for Pentecostals.

> if they were obliged to join issue on these topics with our new breed of theologians.[169]

The issues raised, and the methodology employed, in Beckford's thesis have challenging political and theological implications for Black British Pentecostalism; they also have, however, enormous implications for the continued and reconfigured development and expressions of Black British *political* and Pentecostal *theologies*. Among leading Pentecostal theologians, leaders and activists, there is, unfortunately, the danger of dismissing Beckford's theological insights and framework not because he privileges the use of 'Black expressive cultures', but rather because the use of Rastafarianism as the predominant interpretative frame, and medium of cultural expression and appropriation, is seen as *alien* to Pentecostal ideology and 'holiness' theology. A fundamental aspect of this Pentecostal ideology is the *centrality* of Scripture[170], and the *use* to which they are put (i.e., the integrity and variety of reading canons and hermeneutical schemes). Most Black Pentecostals are conservative/fundamentalists in their views on Scripture and its use in doctrinal commitments and political legitimation. For most Pentecostals, the Scriptures are

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169 Erasmus, Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1971 (translated by Betty Radice, introduction and notes by A.H.T. Levi), p.156.

170 This can be seen in the Creeds and Statements of faith of Pentecostal organisations like the Church of God/New Testament Church of God and the New Testament Assembly (NTA). For the former this is as follows: 'We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.' 'That one of the first principles accepted in the earliest history of its organisation was that we accept the whole Bible rightly divided, which is today one of the most sacred principles...' 'The Church of God stands now, as it has always stood, for the whole Bible, rightly, and for the New Testament as the only rule for government and discipline. It has been necessary at times for the General Assembly of the church to search the Scriptures and interpret the meaning of the Bible to arrive at what is the true and proper teaching of the church on various subjects, but also with the purpose and intention to base our teachings strictly upon the Bible.'(R. H. Gause, Church of God Polity, Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press: 1973, pp.223-224). The Mission Statement of the NTA reads: 'We Believe: In the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. That the Scriptures are infallible, inerrant, and the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and conduct (II Tim. 3v16). *New Testament Assembly Handbook*, January 1996.

fundamental[171] to the development of an authentic 'Black theology'; they perform a critical function in the re-construction of Black Christian 'political consciousness'.

One of the fundamental weaknesses in the *Dread* paradigm for Black Pentecostals is related to the use of the Bible. In Beckford's work, there is a minimalist use of, and engagement with, Scripture. This is perceived as a cardinal flaw in any theological construct destined to inform or influence the political thinking and consciousness of the Black Church, especially the African Christian organisations in Britain. Any Black theology, or liberation theology, which does not *privilege* Scripture is doomed to marginality and irrelevance in Black Christian thought and Pentecostal theology. Gerloff argues that the 'total lack of biblical references both from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament' in Beckford's paradigm presents a problem for Pentecostal hermeneutics:

> In the Pentecostal context, to forget about the Scriptural foundations can only be counterproductive and does not give due credit to the inspirational Biblical language for freedom from enslaving human beings.[172]

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[171] See Joel Edwards', The Cradle, The Cross and the Empty Tomb: A Faith We Can Be Proud To Proclaim, London, Hodder & Stoughton: 2000. Edwards' view and interpretation of Scripture is typical of many Black Pentecostal leaders in Britain, arguing for the biblical basis for doing theology: 'The Bible starts with the beginning of the beginning, by presenting God as the source of life itself...The Bible is one embarrassing litany of miracles! There is simply no way around it. And the greatest of these miracles is Jesus himself, emerging from a woman's womb—yet fully God and fully man—dying for our sins and raised to life for our righteousness. These are either miraculous events or lies, but they cannot be both. There is no other basis on which theology can be done rationally.' (p. 140) See also Hans A Baer, 'The Role of the Bible and Other Sacred Texts in African American Denominations and Sects—Historical and Social Scientific Observations' in Vincent L. Wimbush (ed), African Americans and the Bible—Sacred Texts and Social Textures, London/New York, Continuum:2001; Charles B. Copher, 'Three Thousand Years of Biblical Interpretation with Reference to Black People' in Gayraud S. Wilmore (ed) African American Religious Studies; also in the same volume the essay by Robert A. Bennett, 'Black Experience and the Bible'.

[172] Gerloff 'Response' to Beckford in Anderson and Hollenweger (ed), op. cit., p.65.

The argument is poignantly expressed by Lorna Campbell and Joel Edwards, Black Christian activist and church leader respectively in the NTCG. Campbell argues:

> Beckford excelled in *Jesus is Dread* in championing Black culture and its strength as a theological resource. Unfortunately, this is problematic in that many Black Christians in Black Majority churches would have difficulty in relating to its content due to the lack of reference to Scripture. Perhaps Beckford should have chosen something with which Black Christians can identify rather than Rastafarianism. As a theological resource it is likely that Jesus is Dread would be viewed as unsound and will not resonate with Black Christian thought.[173]

Edwards views Beckford's theology as striking, on the one hand, but also 'politically incorrect' and disturbing, on the other hand:

> Black Christians like myself who grew up in Jamaica and other Caribbean islands and who dread the idea of *Dread* should try to read [Beckford's book] without prejudice. I found his paradigm... evocative. Beckford's point about *Dread*—the idea of *uplifting*—as a uniquely Black cultural context for a theology of emancipation is striking if not politically incorrect and emotionally disturbing for most Black preachers! I suspect it will stay within academy for quite a few years before it finds its way into the average Black convention on a Sunday morning...However, I fear that the work goes too far in seeking to persuade Pentecostalism—married as it is to a classical, conservative view of salvation—that it should embrace a *Dread* Cross. 'Christafari' would inevitably carry a Rastafarian doctrine unrecognisable in the New Testament...Dread stands up as a coherent intellectual tool for a Black paradigm but will ring hollow for most Pentecostals. The danger is that the spokesperson would not be recognised by those he seeks to represent.[174]

Campbell's argument about the absence of Scriptures in Beckford's work, and Edwards' assertion concerning Beckford's theo-political construct not recognisable in Black churches, means in effect that Black

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173 Lorna Campbell, 'An Evaluation of Theological methodology at Work through a Critical Appraisal of *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* by Robert Beckford, unpublished paper, 2002.
174 Joel Edwards, *Review of Dread and Pentecostal* (unpublished paper, 2001).

Pentecostals will always find it theologically and intellectually difficult to find 'sufficient grounds' for using the language of Rastafarianism for theological development or political mobilisation. Although similar criticisms were levelled at James Cone[175] in respect of the use of Scriptures in his theology, there are explicit references in his work to their foundational importance. 'Black Theology', says Cone, 'is kerygmatic theology. That is, it is theology which takes seriously the importance of Scripture[176] in theological discourse.' Cone later gives a classic statement on his hermeneutical principle for scriptural exegesis; and in this respect, one can understand the difficulties Black Pentecostals would have with Beckford's Rastafarian hermeneutic in light of Cone's view of Scripture. The passage from Cone is quoted at length not only because it illustrates the *norms* within which Black political/liberation theologians can utilize a variety of *sources*[177] (especially the Scriptures) to shape and inform their theologies and retain what Cone calls 'a Christian perspective', but it also discloses the cultural and psychological chasm between Pentecostalism and Rastafarianism. Cone maintains:

> The hermeneutical principle for an exegesis of the Scriptures is the revelation of God in Jesus as the liberator of the oppressed from social oppression and to political struggle, wherein the poor recognize that their fight against poverty and injustice is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ the Liberator, the helper and the healer of the wounded, is the point of departure for valid exegesis of the Scriptures from a Christian perspective. Any starting point that ignores God in Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed or that makes salvation as liberation secondary is *ipso facto* invalid and thus heretical. The

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175 Charles B. Copher, Black Biblical Studies, Chicago, Black Light Fellowship: 1993 (especially chapter 5 'African Americans and Biblical Hermeneutics-Black Interpretation of the Bible', pp.67-77)

176 Cone, A Black Theology of Libertation, Philadelphian and New York, J.B. Lippincott Company: 1970, p.66.

177 Cone posits six sources for doing Black Theology. These include the Black experience, Scripture, Black culture and tradition. See A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.53-81.

test of the validity of this starting point, although dialectically related to black cultural experience, is not found in the particularity of the oppressed alone. It is found in the One who freely granted us freedom when we were doomed to slavery. In God's revelation in Scripture we come to the recognition that the divine liberation of the oppressed is not determined by our perceptions but by the God of the Exodus, the prophets and Jesus Christ who calls the oppressed into a liberated existence...And if it can be shown that God as witnessed in the Scriptures is not the Liberator of the oppressed, then Black Theology would have either to drop the 'Christian' designation or to chose another starting point.[178]

The richness of Beckford's theology in his first two books and also his controversially titled third book, *God of the Rahtid: Redeeming Rage,*[179] places him at the forefront of Black Theology in Britain. Beyond the contestable truth-claims of Rastafarian in respect of the divinity of His Majesty,[180] Emperor Haile Selassie I, and the image, ideology and

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[178] James Cone, God of the Oppressed, Minneapolis, The Seabury Press: 1975 pp. 81-82.

[179] This book explores 'redemptive vengeance' and Black rage, i.e., how one can make sense of rage as well as redeem rage in the face of racialised violence, racism and discrimination. Here again, the controversial title and colloquial meaning of the Jamaican word 'rahtid' is likely to hinder critical engagement with the important subject-matter of Beckford's theo-political discourse. Etymologically, 'rahtid' is used and understood in different ways. It can be used as a Jamaican derivative of the biblical word 'wrath', but it is also used colloquially to express 'what you say when you can't use a curse word'. (See God of the Rahtid, London, Darton, Longman & Todd: 2001, pp. 39-40.) The word is also used to express surprise, delight and rouse to anger. In the Jamaican colloquial context, however, Allsop states that *rahtid* is generally considered a euphemism for *rass*, perhaps 'the most vulgar of all Caribbean expressions'. (See Richard Allsop, ed, Dictionary of Caribbean English Usuage, Kingston, Jamaica, University of the West Indies:2003, p.466.)

[180] Beckford recognises this to be a real theological and psychological stumbling block for Pentecostals, but the extent of the problem is not fully recognised. Indeed, one can say that Black Pentecostals will always marginalize and confine to 'heresy' notions legitimating the use of Rastafarianism in Pentecostal theology. For Pentecostals, Rastafarianism as Beckford stated of Caribbean people of his parents' generation, will probably still be seen as 'anti-Christian'. And this is not just on account of some of their ritual practices, but also their understanding of the radical discontinuity in Rastafarian Christology and their Christian faith, especially when the subject of the former denied this tenet of Rastafarianism. In 1967 the news programme *Project 67* raised the question about the Emperor's divinity: 'There are millions of Christians throughout the world, Your Imperial Majesty, who regard you as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.' The Emperor replied: 'I have heard of that idea. I also met certain Rastafarians. I told them clearly that I am a man. that I am mortal. And that I will be replaced by the on-coming generation. And that they should never make a mistake in assuming or pretending that the human being is emanated from a deity.' In 1968, the Emperor further clarified his personal faith: 'To live in this healthy life, a Christian life, is what makes me follow Jesus Christ.' (See William David Spencer, Dread Jesus, London, SPCK:1999, pp.44-45)

language of the *Dread* thesis, Beckford's theo-cultural metaphors signify important *messages* for Black Pentecostals on a number of levels. On one level, *Dread* is 'rebellion', signifying 'freedom from oppression' and 'upliftment' and 'empowerment',[181] on another level *dread* symbolizes both 'insight' and 'progress', as well as a theological construct of universal dimension:

> Dread as progress is concerned with Black thriving, striving and accomplishment. Furthermore, dread is also concerned with the insight gained from engagement with the tragic and grotesque in Black life. Furthermore, while being concerned with Black experience, the word-symbolic focus demands that dread have a universal dimension; I want to suggest that 'dread' as a theological construct, while emerging from Black space, is not confined or limited by it. It also transcends the Black moorings in which I have placed it. In this sense 'dread' is naturally inter-subjective, engaging with other contexts.[182]

In Beckford, Black British theology has a formidable and theologically creative 'insider', giving intellectual credence to a Black hermeneutic two decades after Hollenweger raised his concern about the lack of Black students in higher education in general and theological institutions in particular. Additionally, in Beckfordism there is a theo-cultural paradigm which does not lend itself to *colonization* 'from the other side'. In the 1980s, Black British Christians were concerned about 'the politics' and status of Black Pentecostal research and discourse, i.e., the way in which the predominant *discourse* and writings on Pentecostalism, and Black Christian experience, were constructed, 'colonized'[183] and refracted mainly by white 'outsiders. Beckford's work is

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[181] Beckford, Jesus is Dread, p.144.
[182] Beckford, Dread and Pentecostal, p.168.
[183] Paul Grant and Raj Patel, op. cit., pp.1-2. The *politics* associated with the research produced various responses; no doubt, many Black Christians felt, as the *subject* of 'white researchers', that they were yet again subjected to the anthropological gaze of

a radical departure from the anthropological gaze of the 'outsiders' into Black religious communities. However, the aestheticization of Black 'expressive cultures', principally through Rastafarianism, means that Beckford may have to intellectually resign himself either to what Cornel West[184] refers to as the 'self-imposed marginality' of Black intellectuals, or to something akin to the theological isolation and prophetic non-recognition among Pentecostals alluded to in Matthew 13:57:

> A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Equally important, Beckford's *Dread and Pentecostalism*, along with 'dread hermeneutics' in *Jesus is Dread*, will not only force Black Pentecostals to rethink theologically the meaning of the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy and discourse on Pentecostalism and 'Black British' political theologies, but it will also reconfigure the debate about Black religion and Black culture(s),[185] especially the *appropriation* of the latter to inform a theology which develops within *authentic* Pentecostal traditions.

'outsiders'. For Grant and Patel, this anthropological gaze often amounted to Black religious communities being the 'objects of exploitation' and colonization.

184 bell hooks and Cornel West, Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life, Boston, South End Press:1991, pp. 131-146. West argues: 'The choice of becoming a Black intellectual is an act of self-imposed marginality; it assures a peripheral status in and to the Black community.'

185 See Joel Edwards, 'The Growth of the Urban Black Church in Britain', in *Racial Justice*, Autumn 1991, Issue No.16, pp.2-5; also his 'The Afro-Caribbean Community in Britain'.

PART TWO

Chapter Two - The Pentecostal Doctrine of 'Initial Evidence'

2.0 Defining 'Initial Evidence' Doctrine in Classical Pentecostalism

Classical Pentecostalism[1] has developed and sustained the 'distinctive' doctrine and theology of 'initial evidence'. Although there is evidence of modification[2] in this fundamental Pentecostal 'distinctive', initial

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[1] 'Classical Pentecostal' churches have their origins in the United States of America at the turn of the twentieth century (1906), principally coming out of the Azusa Street Mission under the leadership of William J. Seymour. The beginning of the Movement is often dated from January 1, 1901, when Agnes Ozman (a pupil of Charles F. Parham Bethel Bible School) spoke in tongues. However, glossolalia in the Church of God (formerly the Christian Union) predates the Azusa phenomenon by a decade. In 1896 a revival broke out at Camp Creek, North Carolina, under the leadership of W.F. Bryant. Over one hundred people are reputed to have received the 'baptism' of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. See 'A Brief History of the Church of God', in Book of Minutes, Cleveland, Tenn., Church of God Publishing House:1922. The Church of God became 'Pentecostal' after the first General Overseer, Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson (1909-1923), received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 12 January 1908, and 'spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance'. Tomlinson's experience occurred shortly after G.B. Cashwell visited the General Assembly on 10 January 1908, having experienced the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' at Seymour's Azusa Street Mission. (See Charles Conn, Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press:1977, pp.84-85; A.J. Tomlinson, Answering the Call of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, White Wing Publishing House, nd, pp. 9-10.) According to J.R.Fowler, a leading Assemblies of God minister, it was the adoption of the initial evidence doctrine 'which has made the Pentecostal movement of the Twentieth Century'. (See Carl Brumback, Suddenly From Heaven, p.23); see also H. V Synan's article on 'Classical Pentecostalism', in S.M. Burgess and G.B. McGee (ed) Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Regency Reference Library:1988. Herein after referred to as DPCM.

[2] See Joel Edwards, 'The Pentecostal Distinctives' in Let's Praise Him Again: An African-Caribbean Perspective on Worship, Joel Edwards (ed.), Eastbourne, Kingsway Publication: 1993. ' Black Pentecostalism', argues Edwards, ' has a clear challenge to help churches grow beyond the mark of initial evidence of the Holy Spirit to the substantial evidence of Spirit-filled life. This may mean diverting energies away from the well-worn path of multiple programmes and internal activities towards the discipline of study, personal application and a corporate maturity in the use of spiritual gifts. There is a direct challenge not only to identify the gifts that are lying dormant within the congregation, but also actively to seek the development of other biblical gifts that seldom surface during of worship. The fact is that the label 'Pentecostal' in no way guarantees the fullness of true Pentecost in the life of a local congregation.' (pp.85-86). What comes after, the Post-Pentecostal opportunities and responsibilities, may be seen as a substantiation and authentication of the 'initial' endowment, as indicated by William Caldwell in his Pentecostal Baptism (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Miracle Moments Evangelistic Association Inc: 1963): 'PENTECOST IS ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED by increased responsibilities and additional opportunities. The Spirit-filled believer has entered the gateway of a great new field of Christian service.' (p.90) Officially, the Church of God's doctrinal commitment is firmly entrenched in number 8 and 9 of its 'Doctrinal Commitments' in regard to 'Baptism withy the Holy Ghost' and glossolalia

evidence teaching still has doctrinal prominence in mainstream Pentecostal churches and organizations. In this chapter I shall attempt to do three things. Firstly, to outline the doctrine of initial evidence as it is stated in classical Pentecostalism of the American provenance; secondly, examine the doctrine in the light of biblical and theological sources; and, thirdly, offer some of the fundamental theological responses and hermeneutical challenges to this doctrine which has, to a large extent, characterized the phenomenon of Pentecostalism on the one hand, while providing, on the other hand, a singular biblical and theological focus for a sustained anti-Pentecostal polemic.

While the literature is growing extensively, I see little virtue in listing everything written on the subject. Similarly, although there is a new Pentecostal-Charismatic[3] theological détente, I have excluded a discussion on the 'charismatic phenomenon'. This is because classical Pentecostal doctrine of 'initial evidence' does not define the Charismatic Movement (often referred to as 'the new Pentecost' by virtue of its manifestation of Pentecostal-type Christianity, but differing to classical Pentecostalism in affiliation and doctrine) in the same way it defines 'Pentecostalism', even though the criticisms of Pentecostal glossolalia and

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as the 'initial evidence respectively. (See 1996 and 2000 Minutes of the General Assembly of the Church of God)

[3] The constitutional change of name in 1994 of the historic Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) is a recognition of this fact. See also P.D. Hocken article 'Charismatic Movement' in DPCM, pp.130-160; Edward D. O'Connor, ed, Charismatic Renewal, London, SPCK:1978; L. Grant McClung, Jr., 'Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspectives on a Missiology for the Twenty-First Century', PNEUMA, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring:1994, pp.11-21; D.B. Barrett, 'Global Statistics' in DPCM, pp.810-830. In the late 1980s Barrett argued: 'With Pentecostals/Charismatics now active in 80% of the world's 3,300 large metropolises, all in process of actively implementing networking and cooperation with Great Commission Christians of all confessions, a new era in world mission is clearly underway.' (p.830)

the operation of 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit' would apply to both movements.[4] What I will attempt to do, therefore, is to isolate the main issues in the debate as it relates to the initial evidence teaching of classical Pentecostalism and ways in which a number of chief protagonists have handled both the biblical and extra biblical sources and insights.

Glossolalia plays an important role in Pentecostal identity. The British Pentecostalist, Harold Horton, suggests three reasons why this particular pneumatological manifestation is featured so prominently among Pentecostals:

> Why do we give so much prominence to Tongues?' ask our friends of other denominations. Our reply is that we do not. There are three principal reasons why we seem to give prominence to this gift. First, it is the gift that people are always asking us about and compelling us to discuss. Second, it is the gift that is manifested in each case when believers receive their Baptism in the Holy Spirit, though other gifts may be manifested as well as it: it is therefore often in evidence. Third, it is among the least of the Gifts, and for that further reason it is by far the most frequently distributed and used.[5]

While Horton maintains that the preoccupation with tongues is not an inter-Pentecostal concern, he does intimate a loose definition of the doctrine of 'initial evidence' by arguing that glossolalia 'is therefore often in evidence' that believers have received their 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit, though other gifts may be manifested as well'.

Horton's intimation of the doctrine of initial evidence finds concrete expression in Pentecostal literature and doctrinal commitments.

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4 See Peter Masters and John C. Whitcomb, The Charismatic Phenomenon, London, The Wakeman Trust:1988; Merrill F. Unger, New Testament Teaching on Tongues, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel Publications:1971.

5 Harold Horton, The Gifts of The Spirit, Nottingham, Assemblies of God Publishing House:1934, p.140.

Pentecostals are clear on the function and importance of the doctrine of initial evidence and on the biblical data for what is sometimes called 'precedent theology' for substantiating the initial evidence thesis. While the doctrine of initial evidence varies slightly in the denominational literature of Pentecostal churches, its essential emphasis remains intact.

B.C. Aker offers the following outline[6] of the doctrine of initial evidence as understood by Pentecostals:

> Classical Pentecostals believe in an experience subsequent to salvation called 'spirit baptism'. When one first receives this baptism, he/she will speak in another language. This first speaking is known as the 'initial evidence of speaking in tongues'. Initial evidence for these Pentecostals is an important doctrine, for they argue that this experience is necessary for maintaining a high visibility of the supernatural working of God, something which has been missing from many churches.[7]

Donald Gee, the prominent Assemblies of God (AoG) minister, maintained that the 'initial evidence' thesis was a distinctive feature of the theology and practice of early white Pentecostalism. Gee is speaking for the majority of classical Pentecostals when he states:

> The distinctive doctrine of the Pentecostal churches is that speaking in tongues is the 'initial evidence' of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This article of belief is now incorporated in the official doctrinal schedules of practically all Pentecostal Denominations.[8]

As one of the key exponents on the Pentecostal doctrine of initial evidence, Gee rests his claim on the Lucan evidence in the book of Acts; and he confines his biblical evidence solely to Luke's narrative for the development of his implicit 'precedent theology', i.e., the demonstration

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6 Ben C. Aker, 'Initial Evidence: A Biblical Perspective' p.459, and K. Kendrick, 'Initial Evidence: A Historical Perspective', pp.459-460 in DPCM.

7 Aker, op. cit.

8 Donald Gee, Now That You've Been Baptized In the Spirit, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield Mo., 1972) p.17.

that the accumulated evidence in the book of Acts establishes a clear precedent for the doctrine, theology, and practice of speaking in tongues as the 'initial evidence' that one has received the Holy Spirit.

Both of these ideas are articulated in Gee's booklet '*Speaking in Tongues—The Initial Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*':

> Now the doctrine that speaking with other tongues is the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit rests upon the accumulated evidence of the recorded cases in the book of Acts where this experience is received. Any doctrine on this point must necessarily be confined within these limits for its basis, for the New Testament contains no plain, categorical statement anywhere as to what must be regarded as THE sign. Nevertheless, the circumstantial evidence is quite sufficient to clearly reveal God's mind and will in the matter.[9]

The doctrine is further defined and clarified by another prominent classical Pentecostal, Church of God historian Charles W. Conn. According to Conn, glossolalia is a sign, a physical demonstration, that one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit:

> Tongues are a sign, a witness that accompanies the Holy Spirit when He comes into the human's heart. The phenomenon in the initial physical evidence that one has received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.[10]

Having stated that glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is the 'initial physical evidence' that one has received, or has been baptized in, the Holy Spirit, Conn makes a further distinction between what he calls the 'manifestation of tongues as a *gift* of Spirit'. The effect, says Conn, may be identical, just as the source is identical. But the major distinction is that

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9 Donald Gee, *Speaking in Tongues —The Initial Evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, cited in John R Rice, Speaking With Tongues, Edinburgh, Scotland, Sword of the Lord Publishers:1972, pp. 18-19.

the former is '*initial*' while the latter is '*continual*'[11]. This 'innovative doctrine', as Klaude Kendrick terms it, can be traced back to the early twentieth century classical Pentecostalists who, according to Kendrick, further complicated the confusion by insisting:

> [That] the gift of tongues, one of the nine gifts discussed in 1 Corinthians 12 was divinely intended to be endowed by the Holy Spirit to certain Spirit-baptized believers. Thus there was a universal tongues experience given as a sign or evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and a gift of tongues, given only to those believers who receive this communicating vehicle from the Holy Spirit.[12]

Although Conn adds a novel conceptual nuance in his 'initial' and 'continual' distinction, Kendrick's analysis points to the broad consensus among Pentecostals in regard to speaking in tongues, as argued by the former President of the Church of God Bible College:

> The advent of the Spirit took place about AD 30. The period of time covered by the book of Acts is approximately thirty-three years, during which time the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the first-century church. But this experience did not end with the book of Acts. It is interesting to note that the book of Acts has no benediction or complimentary close. The Apostle Paul was left in his own hired house, preaching the kingdom of God; and Pentecost went on. The experience of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues was not confined to the Day of Pentecost or the first-century church.[13]

The logical consequence of this theological position has serious hermeneutic and ecumenical implications and repercussions;[14] it is often

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[10] See C.W. Conn, 'Glossolalia and the Scripture' in Wade H. Horton (ed) The Glossolalia Phenomenon Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press:1966, p.26.

[11] Ibid.,p.37.

[12] K. Kendrick, 'Initial Evidence, A Historical Perspective' in DPCM, p.459.

[13] See his 'Glossolalia in Contemporary Times' in Wade H. Horton (ed), The Glossolalia Phenomenon, p. 149.

[14] The Pentecostal pneumatological understanding and practice has always been a bone of contention and a focus of controversy. Stuart Allen maintains that 'Baptism in the

the focus of radical polemic against one of the central tenets of Pentecostalism. Those Pentecostal protagonists who contend for the integrity and authenticity of the 'initial evidence' thesis would support Conn in his argument and its radical, even uncharitable, ecumenical implications:

> Those who claim to have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit but have never spoken in tongues make a mistaken claim. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-6 where the subject is the gift of the Spirit it is implied that the gift of tongues is not manifested through all. In verse 30 where the question is asked: Do all speak with tongues?' it is the gift of tongues that is being considered[15].

2.1 Charles Fox Parham and A.J. Tomlinson as Pioneers of Initial Evidence

The views expounded by Conn and others[16] were the central hallmarks and prominent features that characterized the early Pentecostal pioneers at the beginning of the century, contributing to the somewhat pejorative term for the movement as 'the tongues movement'[17]. Charles Fox Parham (White), one of the founding fathers of the Pentecostal Movement which

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Holy Spirit' has been 'a doctrine which has done more to shatter external unity in Christendom than any thing else'. See his The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, London, The Berean Publishing Trust:1980, p.25; Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals; Morton Kelsey, Tongue Speaking: An Experiment in Spiritual Experience, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company:1964. Kelsey argues that tongues 'undoubtedly causes conflict' but it is not necessarily evil from a Christian point of view, especially if development and growth arise out of this conflict (p.230).

[15] Conn, op. cit., p.38.

[16] Wade Horton, The Glossolalia Phenomenon, pp. 143-177. In this collection of essays, most of the authors subscribe to the classic Pentecostal hermeneutic on glossolalia as initial evidence. Interestingly enough, Conn cautions against attaching 'undue significance to glossolalia', arguing that it is not to be sought as an 'end in itself' or 'for its own sake' (p.25). However, this appears somewhat disingenuous given its place and function in the origin and development of modern American Pentecostalism. Indeed, without glossolalia there is no Pentecostalism: the two are inextricably linked. Glossolalia is, ipso facto, Pentecostalism, functioning at the same time as necessary and sufficient condition for each other.

[17] See C.H. Lang, The Modern Gift of Tongues: Whence Is It?, London, Marshall Brothers: nd, p.52.

began in the United States of America, and later Ambrose J. Tomlinson of the Church of God, were both champions and architects of the initial evidence doctrine. William J. Seymour (Black), the other founding father of modern day Pentecostalism, understood glossolalia not so much as an exclusive distinctive, but rather as a mark of spiritual inclusivitity with implications for what Nelson terms 'interracial inclusiveness'.[18] William Parham recalls how the initial inspiration for what later became the cornerstone of the Pentecostal doctrinal edifice came to him in 1900:

> We had reached in our studies a problem—what about the 2nd chapter of Acts? I had felt for years that any missionary going to the foreign field should preach in the language of the natives. That if God had ever equipped His ministers in that way He could do it today. That if Balaam's mule could stop in the middle of the road and give the first preacher that went out for money a 'bawling out' in Arabic that anybody today ought to be able to preach in any language of the world if they had horse sense enough to let God use their tongue and throat.[19]

Parham states that having heard so many different religious groups claiming different proofs 'as the evidence of their having the Pentecostal baptism', he set his students the task of investigating 'diligently' the biblical evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit so 'that we might go before the world with something that was indisputable because it tallied absolutely with the Word'.[20] The result of their diligent investigation, and Parham's experience, would later form the basis of the Pentecostal movement and the development of the doctrine of initial evidence.

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[18] Douglas J. Nelson, *For Such a Time as This: the Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, May 1981), p.204.

[19] See Charles Fox Parham, 'The Story of the Origin of the Original Apostolic or Pentecostal Movement' in The Life of Charles F. Parham, Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement, Joplin, Missouri, Tri-State Printing Co.,:1930, p.52.

[20] Ibid.

Parham recalls his amazement of this biblical discovery by his students thus:

> To my astonishment they all had the same story...When the Pentecostal blessing fell, that the indisputable proof on each occasion was that they spake with other tongues...When I beheld the evidence of the restoration of Pentecostal power, my heart was melted in gratitude to God for what my eyes had seen.[21]

A.J. Tomlinson, like Parham argued and developed the doctrine of initial evidence from biblical reflection and personal experience. Argument from experience is never a sufficient starting point for theological construction and the formulation of doctrinal imperatives. Nonetheless, it was Tomlinson's desire to use his influence to draw 'the minds of the people back to the Bible' until they attained the same Christian 'experience enjoyed by the Holy Apostles'.[22] For Tomlinson the baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience he could lay claim to, would allow one to appropriate this experience and empower one for accomplishing the task of 'carrying the gospel of the kingdom into all the world'.[23]

Great emphasis was laid on the manifestation of tongues and the doctrine of *speaking* in tongues as the physical 'initial evidence' that one had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Tomlinson's biblical evidence is drawn primarily from the book of Acts. Although some reference is made to the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit in John's gospel (Jn 3:3, 15:26), there is no serious attempt to deal with the Pauline treatment

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[21] Parham op. cit., pp. 52-54.

[22] A.J. Tomlinson, The Last Great Conflict, New York and London, Garland Publishing Inc: 1985 (originally published in 1913, Cleveland Tenn., Press of W.E Rodgers), p.90.

[23] Ibid.

of the subject in the epistles and its liturgical and regulatory practice and implications. Indeed, there is no recognition or hermeneutical wrestling with the 'paradigmatic reading' strategy for biblical interpretation, and the possibility that such a reading strategy might suggest equally valid, and contestable, conclusions in the Lukan and Pauline Texts.[24]

Explicit in the Lukan material is the suggestion that speaking in 'other tongues' is intelligible proclamation linked with prophecy:

> For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.' (Acts 2:15-18)

After marshalling the Scriptural data from the book of Acts (i.e. Acts 2,8,10,19) Tomlinson concludes:

> Then with all these scriptures as proof we are on solid footing when we say that speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance is the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost. And if that evidence was needed for Jesus' disciples and the mother of our Lord, the same unmistakable evidence is needed today. There has never been any change made in the teaching of Scripture; the only change that has ever been made about speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance being the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost, has been made by false teachers.[25]

Tomlinson was convinced about the physical, tangible, and objective proof that speaking in tongues authenticated and certified one had received the Holy Spirit baptism. Indeed, like Parham's claims of

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[24] See H.J. Bernard Combrink, 'Structuralism' and 'Pentecost' in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (ed) The Oxford Companion to the Bible, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1993.

[25] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

'indisputable proof', Tomlinson championed what he called the 'unmistakable evidence' in regard to baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This 'emphatic and radical' Pentecostal hermeneutic was recognized by Tomlinson to be at variance with the majority of mainstream churches, and the received theological wisdom and insights of Christendom. One of the reasons felt by Tomlinson for pressing this *new revelation* and doctrine in the way he did was largely due to the opposition shown by so many professors of the Christians religion to 'this sacred and all important truth'.[26] Taking, as he perceived it, a 'decided and uncompromising' stand for the truth in the same way that 'the Holy Apostles stood for it in the beginning of the Gospel dispensation', gave Tomlinson an apocalyptical sense of urgency and messianism[27] concerning his role in the Pentecostal movement and its newfound pneumatological emphasis and doctrinal purity.

According to Tomlinson the Pentecostal challenge to spread the new doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidence by speaking in tongues, was the urgent task and mission of all its adherents, notwithstanding the opposition from both men and satan:

> God is now raising up a people to engage in this last great struggle and conflict against formalism, perverted scriptures and theories of men, who will sacrifice their lives, if need be, rather to surrender any part of the truth that came from the sacred lips of Jesus, and the inspired pens of the Apostles. After a careful and prayerful searching and study, for more than four years, we are sure we are on solid foundation when we say that no one has ever been baptized with the Holy Spirit without speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance...Satan knows that speaking in tongues as at Pentecost, Acts 2:4 and at the house of Cornelius,

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[26] Ibid., p.97.

[27] See Charles W. Conn, Like A Mighty Wind: A History of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press: 1977.

> Acts 10:46, and at Ephesus, Acts 19.6 is the evidence that a person is baptized with the Holy Ghost, and this being the case, he is bringing all his power to bear and united his forces against this one point.[28]

From the early Pentecostal literature it is clear that the Pentecostal emphasis on speaking in tongues, on the one hand, and the doctrine of tongues as the 'initial evidence' of Spirit baptism, on the other hand, were the cornerstone of the new movement and the teaching which raised both theological suspicion and popular curiosity.[29]

But less than two decades after the initial theological conclusions which came from Charles Fox Parham and his Bible students in Topeka, and the revival in Los Angeles under the African-American Holiness minister, William J. Seymour, Tomlinson was expressing his profound concern over the apparent weak conviction some Pentecostals were now expressing in regard to the Pentecostal distinctive of tongues and the initial evidence doctrine. Having rediscovered 'this precious truth' from the Bible— 'this sacred and all important truth'— Tomlinson reiterates his concern and fear with the apparent weakening and compromising on the baptism in the Holy Spirit:

> ...so many have weakened on the doctrine and compromised on the blessed truth of God especially as to the tongues being the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and are trying to do away with all manifestations and demonstrations of the Spirit, we feel under renewed obligations, moved by the Spirit of God, to rush into the

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[28] Op. cit., pp. 97-98.

[29] See C.F. Parham, op. cit., pp.53-55; Frank Bartleman, How 'Pentecost' Came to Los Angles, Los Angles, California, Privately Published:1925; see also Bartleman's Another Wave Rolls In! (formerly What Really Happened at 'Azusa Street?'), Monroeville, Pa, Whitaker Books: 1971; Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, London, SCM Press:1972; Robert M. Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism, New York, Oxford University Press:1979; Fred J. Foster, Think It Not Strange: A History of the Oneness Movement, St Louis, Mo., Pentecostal Publishing House:1965.

conflict and raise our voice to a light pitch and move our pens with more alacrity and dexterity to hold up the full standard of Pentecostal in every particular phase.[30]

2.2 Initial Evidence Doctrine in Pentecostal Credo

With the early Pentecostal pioneers, we witness the development and pervasive influence of the doctrine of initial evidence and the Pentecostal hermeneutic of the Holy Spirit and the experiential dimension of apostolic pneumatology. The Pentecostals believed in and enshrined a doctrine of the Spirit which presented a new and asymmetrical interpretation to both the Holiness discourse on 'sanctification'[31] and the reformed and popular view current in the churches. This classical Pentecostal legacy still informs and characterizes doctrinal positions and declarations of faith, as the examples below illustrate.

In its 'Statement of Truth' the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, founded in 1948, reiterates the organization's position thus:

> **5.** We believe that the full gospel includes holiness of heart and life, healing for the body and the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence or speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. [32]

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[30] Op. cit., pp.98-99.

[31] The Holiness Movement gave rise to the Pentecostal Movement, influencing its theology and practice. The Holiness views on 'sanctification' are critically discussed in V. Synon, The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company:1971, pp. 33-54; -Donald W. Dayton, The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism, New Jersey and London, The Scarecrow Press:1987, pp.73-94; L. Lovett, 'Black Holiness Pentecostalism', in DPCM, pp. 76-84;C. E. Jones, 'Holiness Movement', in DPCM, pp.406-409.

[32] Quoted in John F. Nichol, Pentecostalism—The Story of the Growth and Development of a Vital New Force in American Protestantism, New York, Harper and Row Publishers: 1966, p.4; see also C.W. Parnell, Understanding Tongues Speaking, London, Lakeland: 1972, pp. 68-69.

The Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, one of the largest Pentecostal Churches in America adopts a similar creedal stance:

> ***We believe:***
>
> **6.** In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ, through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
>
> **8.** In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
>
> **9.** In speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost[33].

The Scriptural data employed to substantiate these teachings in the 'Doctrinal Commitments' of the Church of God included Mt.3:11 and Acts 1:4 for point 8 where John the Baptist refers to the baptism 'with the Holy Ghost and with fire' which Christ would wrought in future believers as opposed to John's own preparatory baptism with 'water' unto repentance; and where Jesus, after his resurrection, contrasts John's baptism with the new baptism awaiting the disciples and its concomitant 'power' and endowment for witnessing respectively. In regard to point 9 of the 'Doctrinal Commitments', only four Scriptural references are offered; and these include an obscure reference to the coming of the '*paracletus*' announced by Jesus in John 15: 26.

> This text bears no apparent relevance to baptism of the Holy Spirit or to speaking in tongues as a sign of the Spirit's presence, or as being the

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33 See 'Our Statement of Faith' in Church of God, 1984, Minutes & Supplement of the 60th General Assembly, Church of God, Cleveland, Tenn.), pp.4-6.

initial evidence.[34] Interestingly enough, though Acts 8:14-17 is often used by Pentecostals to substantiate the teaching that 'speaking in tongues' was a 'normative post-salvation religious experience'[35] in the early Church according to the book of Acts, it is omitted here. Indeed, its inferential[36] nature makes it, arguably, problematic in establishing speaking in tongues as both a physical demonstration of one's baptism in the Holy Spirit, as well as it being the 'initial evidence' of a post-salvation experience.

The views of Pentecostals like Garfield T. Haywood[37], Oral Roberts, William G. MacDonald, Carl Brumback, and Charles Conn, are congruent with this version of classical Pentecostal teaching on the Holy Spirit as the *modus operandi* in the apostolic era. For Haywood, tongues were a sign of God's acceptance of all people, the coming of 'the Comforter' and the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit:

> Tongues were a sign on the day of Pentecost that the Comforter had come. They were a sign to the saints at Damascus that Paul was

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34 See Anthony Casurella, The Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers: A Study in the History of Exegesis, Tubingen, Mohr:1983.

35 Klaude Kendrick, op. cit., p.459; see also James D.G. Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, Peterborough, Epworth Press:1996, pp.110-111.

36 The inferential nature of Acts 8 is important for Conn. (W. Conn, op cit., p.46.) He cites three authorities to support his view that speaking in tongues can be inferred from the Samaritan revival in the Acts narrative, even though Luke omits it: 'F.F. Bruce says, 'The context leaves us in no doubt that the reception of the Spirit was attended by external manifestations such as had marked His descent on the earliest disciples at Pentecost.' A. T. Robinson, commenting on the Greek text, states that the language structure 'shows plainly that those who received the gift of the Holy Spirit spoke with tongues'. John Trapp, the great Puritan scholar of the seventeenth century, commented that the Holy Spirit fell upon the Samaritans 'in those extraordinary gifts of tongues and miracles." ('Glossolalia and the Scriptures', p.46).

37 Bishop Garfield Thomas Haywood (1880-1831) of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW) was a prolific writer. As one of the early Black Pentecostal pioneers his leadership and organizing skills were highly regarded. Haywood helped to incorporate the PAW in 1919, becoming its Presiding Bishop in 1925 when the church moved to an episcopal polity. PAW is one of the oldest interracial 'Oneness' Pentecostal organizations. Haywood's hymn, *'I see A Crimson Stream of Blood'*, is a classic in Pentecostal congregations and churches outside the Pentecostal tradition.

one of them. They were a sign to Peter and the six Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles, and that they had received the Holy Ghost. They were a sign to Paul at Ephesus that the disciples had the real thing and were sealed to the day of redemption. They were a sign that the Corinthians were baptized into the one body...They were signs to Apostolic Fathers that a man received the Holy Ghost...And we cannot believe that a man has received the Holy Ghost until we see the signs as were manifested in Apostolic days, therefore tongues were a sign.[38]

Oral Robert states:

> There is first of all, the tongues evidence or the tongues one immediately speaks in when he is filled with the Holy Ghost as evidence that he is filled.[39]

For Brumback, the 'new birth' is singularly experienced with the witness of the Spirit in speaking in tongues:

> ...one experience must be received by all who would enter the kingdom—the new birth...In like manner, all believers are commanded to receive one experience — the baptism or filling with the Spirit. Again, physical, emotional and intellectual reactions are as varied as the recipients, but again one evidence uniformly accompanies the experience-the witness of the Spirit through us in other tongues.[40]

A similar argument is pursued by Conn in his attempt to exegetically clarify the Pentecostal theological position on speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit:

> In the Scriptures the Baptism with the Holy Ghost was always attended by conspicuous manifestations of the Divine presence. The common manifestation was speaking with unknown tongues, or languages. This phenomenon was the consistent evidence that the Holy Spirit had come. There were many other evidences that could be observed later, such as a life of spiritual dedication and power...Whereas these evidences required time, tongues gave

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38 Paul D. Dugas, The Life and Writings of Elder G.T. Haywood, Portland, OR, Apostolic Publishers:1968, pp.28-29.

39 Oral Roberts, The Baptism with the Holy Spirit, Tulsa, Oral Roberts:1964) p.20.

40 Carl Brumback, 'What Meaneth This?', Springfield, Mo., The Gospel Publishing House:1974, p.248.

immediate witness that the Spirit had come. Speaking in tongues is therefore appropriately called the initial evidence of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Scriptural evidence is not wanting on the subject of tongues. It is in fact, treated more adequately than any other signtype phenomenon.[41]

2.3 Refutations of 'Classical' Pentecostalism—Beyond Initial Evidence Doctrine

While Parham's 'indisputable proof', Tomlinson's 'unmistakable evidence', Brumback's monocasual glossolaliac thesis, along with Conn's 'conspicuous manifestations', have all contributed to the classical Pentecostal hermeneutics of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' and the attendant doctrine of 'initial evidence' there have been, and are, intimations of doubt and uncertainty as to whether speaking in tongues is the evidence — the 'only' evidence that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit or experienced the 'new birth'.

In arguing for the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the *locus classicus* of the 'initial evidence' thesis, Donald Gee insisted that the discourse be confined to the book of Acts 'where this experience is received'. Gee was also of the view, as stated above, that the New Testament contained 'no plain, categorical statement' anywhere as to what must be regarded as the sign of this baptism. This admission furnished the clue for John R. Rice's anti-initial evidence polemic .[42]

Rice's refutation of the doctrine of 'initial evidence' is founded on two major premises: firstly, that if the doctrine of initial evidence were an important doctrine of the Bible, it would be started in connection with

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41 Charles W. Conn, op. cit., p.35.

42 John R. Rice, op. cit.

Pentecost when speaking with tongues first appeared in the New Testament; and secondly, that the inferential nature of some of the biblical texts used by the Pentecostals makes the thesis one 'founded on inference alone, or on human reasoning, not on any statement of the Word of God'.[43] Rice's argument is further elaborated:

> There is not a single statement, either before Pentecost or after it, in which the Bible speaks of the gift of tongues or speaking in tongues as the evidence, the initial evidence or part of the evidence of being filled with the Spirit or baptized with the Spirit...the Bible nowhere shows that speaking in tongues is the Bible evidence or even the initial evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.[44]

According to Rice, speaking in tongues at Pentecost was incidental, secondary, and not important to the principal meaning of Pentecost. Our 'frail and tainted human nature', argues Rice, is responsible for our proclivity to 'seize on the incidentals instead of the essentials' and to be more concerned about outward form than inward power.[45] Rice concludes that the Pentecostal doctrine of 'initial evidence' is essentially inspired by biblical inference and not categorical (doctrinal) statements; it is also, he argues, informed by unsound biblical interpretation.

Unlike the Pentecostal claim that speaking in tongues is the sign, the 'initial evidence' that one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Rice contends that the 'power' Jesus spoke about to his disciples before

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[43] John R. Rice, Speaking with Tongues, p.19. Says Rice: 'There is not a single Christian duty which is left to inference or logic. Every one is clearly stated...And if the fullness of the Spirit at Pentecost were proved simply by speaking in tongues I believe that the Bible would clearly say so. No one has a right to command me to seek what the Bible does not command me to seek, and the Bible nowhere commands that I should seek to speak in tongues' (p.20). See also Rice's The Power of Pentecost or the Fullness of the Spirit (chapter 4 'Misunderstood Pentecost').

[44] Ibid., p.19.

[45] Rice, The Power of Pentecost or the Fullness of the Spirit, p.82.

his ascension[46] 'was itself the evidence' that they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal argument for speaking in tongues as being both the 'necessary' and objective sign[47] of the Holy Spirit baptism raises serious doubts from many quarters, not least among some Pentecostals themselves, about the sign or 'evidence' of the Holy Spirit baptism and its consequences in the life of the believer.

L. Thomas Holdcroft concurs with most Pentecostals that speaking in tongues on biblical grounds 'is a necessary and essential evidence of the baptism in the Spirit'.[48] However, while this essentialist Pentecostal hermeneutic is advocated, Holdcroft maintains that although 'tongues are a necessary sign of the Spirit baptism', tongues alone are not 'a sufficient sign'.[49] And if there is any inclination for Pentecostals to advance the proposition that speaking in tongues or any other pneumatological/charismatic experience vindicates one's faith, or makes one a better Christian, Holdcroft intimates a degree of doubt concerning this type of correspondence.

While he maintains that an 'experience of Spirit baptism that does not lead to a deeper walk with God is disappointing',[50] Holdcroft does not share the view that a 'Pentecostal experience' necessarily advances one's faith and commitment. Indeed, his position is echoed by Alice Shevkenek:

> Being filled with the Holy Spirit is no guarantee that you will bear more fruit, for the Holy Spirit is given us for power to serve, and to

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46 Rice, Speaking With Tongues, p.21.

47 Conn, 'Glossolalia and the Scriptures', op. cit., pp.35-37.

48 L.T. Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation, Springfield, Mo., Gospel Publishing House:1979 (originally published in 1962), p.122.

49 Ibid., p.123.

50 Ibid.

> bear fruit you must abide in Christ, and be purged and cleansed by Him through the Word.[51]

The uncertainty raised by Gee, along with the insufficiency argument pointed out by Holdcroft in regard to the Pentecostal claim that glossolalia is the initial evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit, was raised earlier in the Pentecostal movement.

In 1909 Rev. D. Wesley Myland played down the hegemony that tongues had come to occupy in the Pentecostal movement. No great emphasis was placed on tongues, or the doctrine of initial evidence. Myland had rather warned against the *magnification* of tongues— 'the advance agent, the tell tale of Pentecost' as he terms it— in the experience and liturgy of the believer, on the one hand, as well as the inherent dangers of satanic counterfeit and imitation of this charismatic phenomenon, on the other hand. According to Myland, tongues is the 'least' of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and its manifestation is susceptible to satanic imitation:

> Now I am no modifier of tongues...nor am I a stickler about tongues...but I will not, I can not, and I shall not magnify tongues out of its legitimate place, its scriptural setting, and its value compared with other gifts of the Spirit. Tongues [are] the least of all the gifts and subordinate to other gifts and when it is not kept so there is some imbalance. It is least because it is last and because it is physical...Satan can manifest all the three physical gifts...Satan can imitate each of these three...Satan works from the physical, from the lower up. God works from the spiritual down.[52]

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[51] Quoted in Holdcroft, op. cit., p.133.

[52] See D.Wesley Myland, 'The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power', pp.108-109, in Donald W. Dayton (ed), Three Early Pentecostal Tracts, New York and London, Garland Publishing Inc.:1985 (originally published in 1910 by The Evangel Publishing House, Chicago).

Myland was much more concerned with other aspects and meaning of Pentecost— i.e., the promise, preparation, position, profusion, penetration, purpose and performance of Pentecost,[53] than with tongues and the initial evidence doctrine. And when reference was made to Spirit baptism, Myland was somewhat imprecise and metaphysical in his usage. Accordingly, Myland maintained that one needed 'a baptism of interpretation when you get a baptism of tongues, and some need a baptism of discernment...a baptizing of wisdom...baptism of knowledge and a great baptism of faith'.[54] What Myland observed in 1909 still has a deep resonance in Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal circles[55]:

> The great deficiency in this movement is interpretation of tongues and discernment of spirits and these are the fundamental parts of Pentecost[56].

Less than two decades after the Pentecostal outpouring in Los Angeles in William J. Seymour's Azusa Street Mission, the doctrine of 'initial evidence' threatened to split the growing Assemblies of God. Although glossolalia was a significant feature of Seymour's Azusa Street Mission, it was not the exclusivist doctrine of 'initial evidence' that it became in white Pentecostal organizations.[57] This important distinction

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[53] Ibid., pp.110-120.

[54] Ibid., p.112.

[55] In considering the operation of the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit' in the Church today, over 60 % of the respondents from Mile End New Testament Church of God state that 'prophecy', 'word of knowledge' and 'word of wisdom' are among the four most important gifts they would like to see operating in the local church.

[56] Myland, op. cit., p.112.

[57] See James S. Tinney, 'Exclusivist Tendencies in Pentecostal Self-Definition: A Critique from Black Theology', in *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 36/1, 1979, pp.32-49.

between Black and White leaders in early classical Pentecostalism is summarized by Ithiel Clemmons:

> In contrast to the black leaders at the Azusa revival, the white leaders who ultimately dominated the revival movement invariably understood the Pentecostal distinctive as 'speaking in tongues'. They overlooked the black perspective in which speaking in tongues was seen only as a sign of divine power and presence that brings all people together in reconciliation. This reconciliation secured by the Holy Spirit, black leaders often said, is the secret of God's power and plan...Whites focused on the phenomenology of the Pentecostal experience and precipitated a confusion akin to the confusion of the early Corinthian Church. African Americans, by virtue of their tragic sense of history, are perennial 'stalkers after meaning'. White Pentecostals forgot the Blacks' search for meaning and placed primary emphasis on the phenomena of speaking in tongues.[58]

Indeed, Seymour was concerned with the 'real evidence' and the function of this Pentecostal power 'in everyday life'; he wanted Spirit baptism to engender a deeper love for God and a radical love for our brother and sisters in 'one common family'. Seymour expressed his Pentecostal theology thus in 1907:

> Tongues are one of the signs that go with every baptized person, but it is not the real evidence of the baptism in every day life. If you get angry, or speak evil, or back-bite, I care not how many tongues you may have, you have not the baptism with the Holy Ghost. You have lost your salvation...the secret is: one accord, one place, one heart, one soul, one mind, one prayer. If God can get a people anywhere in one accord and in one place, of one heart, mind and soul, believing for this great power, it will fall and Pentecostal results will follow...O how my heart cries out to God in these days that He would make every child of His see the necessity of living in the 17th chapter of John, that we may be one in the body of Christ, as Jesus prayed...The Pentecostal power, when we sum it all up, is just more of God's love. If it does not bring more of God's love it is simply a counterfeit. Pentecost means to live right in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, which is the standard...This is Bible religion. It is not manufactured religion. Pentecost makes us love

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[58] Bishop Ithiel C. Clemmons, Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ, California, Pneuma Life Publishing:1996 (Centennial edition),p.56.

> Jesus more and love our brothers more. It brings us all into one common family.[59]

In the Assemblies of God, the controversial issue of evidential tongues came to a head at the 1918 General Council when the AoG finally rejected the identification of rebirth with the baptism of the Spirit as heresy.[60] According to Carl Brumback, the controversy was fuelled by Fred Francis Bosworth, A.G. Canada and others in the Assemblies of God organization expressing theological equivocation and suspicion concerning the Pentecostal hermeneutical and doctrinal hegemony of the doctrine of 'initial evidence'.[61] Bosworth, argues R. M. Riss, believed that glossolalia was 'only one of many possible indications that a person was baptized in the Holy Spirit'.[62] Bosworth's argument against the 'initial evidence' teaching was expressed in a letter to J.W. Welch in 1918:

> I do not believe, nor can I ever teach that all will speak in tongues when baptized in the Spirit. [63]

The debate and the ensuing vote that took place at the 1918 General Council went against Bosworth. In doctrinal and pastoral terms, the conclusion reached at the General Council now meant that it was no longer possible to be a minister of the Assemblies of God and at the same time 'deny the distinctive doctrine of the Assemblies of God that speaking

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[59] Douglas J. Nelson, op. cit., pp.204-205.

[60] See George T. Montague, 'Pentecostal Fire: Spirit Baptism in Luke-Acts', in Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press:1991, p.27.

[61] See Carl Brumback's treatment of the issue in Suddenly From Heaven: A History of the Assemblies of God, Springfielf, Mo., Gospel Publishing House:1961.

[62] See R.M. Riss' article on F.F. Bosworth in DPCM, p.94; Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, pp.32-33.

[63] Brumback, op. cit., p. 216.

with tongues had necessarily to accompany baptism in the Spirit'.[64] While a distinction is admitted between conversion and baptism in the Spirit, the theory of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence still predominates in the Assemblies of God catechism and theological literature:

> Isn't it [the baptism in the Spirit] always received at conversion? No. Paul visiting the Ephesian Christians asked then this pointed question: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? (Acts 19:5) Obviously they had not received when they had believed. It is of course true that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, but there is a vast difference between having the Holy Spirit with you and being filled by him. What is the sign of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The sign of the infilling of the Spirit is speaking with other tongues.[65]

The resignation of F.F. Bosworth from the Assemblies of God, and the General Council debate in 1918 on the 'initial evidence' thesis, marked an important turning point in the organization. This historic event occasioned two important things: firstly, it helped to set the doctrinal infrastructure for the *distinctive* sign and symbol of Pentecostalism; and secondly, it simultaneously reaffirmed the 'commitment to the gift of tongues as *the only* initial sign of baptism in the Spirit'.[66] It is difficult to assess the true impact the General Council ruling had on individual ministers and members. Even if a few more ministers had caught the separatist spirit in these early years, ministerial and organizational unity in spreading the new Pentecostal message and its spiritual impact was probably viewed as infinitely more important than intellectual and theological certainty.

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64 W. Hollenweger, op. cit.; Brumbach, op. cit.

65 Assemblies of God, 'You Have Accepted Christ', p.5 , cited in Hollenweger, op. cit., p.32.

66 See R. M. Riss, op. cit., p.94.

However, the debate over this critical issue did not fade away in the AoG, or in other Pentecostal denominations, with the General Council pontifications, as can be seen in the German Pentecostal movement.[67] Both Leonhard Steiner and Jonathan Paul rejected the initial evidence doctrine. Jonathan Paul argued:

> It is not our view that only those who have spoken in tongues have received the Holy Spirit.[68]

The conclusion drawn by Leonhard Steiner on this distinctive doctrine of classical Pentecostalism is one of doctrinal dissonance:

> My conclusion then is that one can no longer maintain the doctrine of stages of salvation. This inevitably leads to the rejection of the distinctive doctrine of Pentecostalism. This does not entail the rejection of the Pentecostal movement that is, the experience of the Spirit which is to be found in it. There are numerous genuine examples of the experiences of the Spirit without there being present a correct understanding of the Spirit.[69]

Steiner raised the issue of 'initial evidence' at the First European Pentecostal Conference in Stockholm in 1939 by asking whether it was right to base the Pentecostal understanding of 'the baptism of the Spirit on the Acts of Apostles, and the experience of the twelve apostles'; and whether the epistles would yield answers corresponding to Pentecostal practice.

By raising the question in this way Steiner, wanted to move away from the scriptural hegemony of Acts as the *locus classicus* for the Pentecostal hermeneutic of the meaning and function of the baptism in

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67 See Walter Hollenweger's treatment in The Pentecostals, chapters 17,18, 22.

68 Quoted in Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, p.236.

69 Ibid., p. 335.

the Holy Spirit. In an attempt to widen the scriptural basis[70] for a more comprehensive understanding of the Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament, a host of other questions were brought into sharp focus. Some of these inevitably included the status of Luke's narrative and whether critical priority should be given to the writer of the third Gospel as 'historian' or as a 'theologian'; the transitional nature of early Church; and more importantly the soteriological implications of 'baptism' and 'initiation' into the Church, the body of Christ.[71]

2.4 James Dunn, MacArthur, and Spirit Baptism as Incorporation into the Body of Christ

James Dunn's examination of Pentecostal teaching and 'baptism in the Spirit' attempts to refute aspects of this Pentecostal hermeneutic. However, Pentecostals would argue that he does not deal adequately with

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[70] See J. R. Michaels, 'Luke-Acts' in DPCM, pp.544-560; J. Massyngbaerde, 'Towards a Theology of Speaking in Tongues' in Watson E. Mills (ed) Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1986, pp. 263-294; Frederick Dale Brunner, A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness, London, Hodder and Stoughton:1970, pp.33-57; H. B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers, London, MacMillan:1912. Interestingly enough, Swete states that the connection between the Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and the promise of the 'Paraclete' was not always made: 'That the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Church was realized by the early post-apostolic writers; but they do not appear to have connected the fact with the Lord's promise of another (Comforter) Paraclete or with the event of Pentecost. Even the Apologists of the second century refer but seldom and vaguely to the Pentecostal gift.' (p.390)

[71] See Brunner, op. cit.; J. R. Michaels, op. cit.; Timothy B. Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age', PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 15 (Fall 1993), pp.163-187; I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press: 1980; F.F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (ed), The Beginnings of Christianity (Part 1 Vol.1), London, MacMillan & Co.:1920. In respect of the 'gift of the Holy Spirit', Jackson and Lake argue that although Luke maintains that the gift of the Holy Spirit was the 'the most important constant factor throughout the first Christian generation', that it is, nonetheless, hard to repress the suspicion that the early narrative in Acts was 'written by an editor who did not know from his own experience what 'speaking in tongues' was, and thought it meant a miraculous gift of speaking foreign languages'. (pp. 321-324)

the doctrine of initial evidence. While Dunn's principal aim was to 'introduce scholars, students and ministers to the most distinctive aspects of Pentecostal theology — baptism in the Holy Spirit'[72] — he also challenged the sacramentalist understanding and identification of water baptism with Spirit baptism, i.e., the notion that water baptism is synonymous with Spirit baptism.[73] Critical issues are raised by Dunn in his attempt to bring 'clarity of thought' to the discussions:

> But does the N.T. mean by baptism in the Holy Spirit, what the Pentecostal understands the phrase to mean? Is baptism in the Holy Spirit to be separated from conversion-initiation, and is the beginning of the Christian life to be thus divided up into distinctive stages. Is Spirit baptism something essentially different from becoming a Christian, so that even a Christian of many years standing may never have been baptized in the Spirit? These are some of the important questions which Pentecostal teaching raises...what is the place of the gift of the Spirit in the total complex event of becoming a Christian...the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism makes a new and important contribution to an old debate, and by focusing attention on the gift of the Spirit and separating the gift of the Spirit from conversion-initiation, it both revitalizes the debate and calls into question many of the traditionally accepted views of Christian baptism.[74]

The soteriological implications of Dunn's 'conversion-initiation' dynamic become the interrogatory mechanism for refutation and contextualization of the Pentecostal hermeneutic of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. According to Dunn, the distinctive Pentecostal view on the

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[72] This Pentecostal critique was Dunn's doctoral work at Cambridge under C.F.D. Moule and later published as Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today, London, SCM Press:1970. (p.5.) See article on Dunn in DPCM, p.255.

[73] A Pentecostal critique would begin by arguing: (a) there is insufficient cognizance of the initial evidence imperative in Pentecostalism, (b) there is insufficient attention paid to the sources of initial evidence in the early writers, and (c) there is not a clear argument in support of 'salvation by grace' –'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).

baptism of the Holy Spirit is scripturally unsound, theologically untenable and, more importantly, soteriologically defective. It is 'the anointing of the Spirit' says Dunn, 'what makes a man a Christian' (2 Cor. 1:21) and it is the gift of Spirit which enables one to participate;[75] similarly, it is the 'baptism in the Spirit' which effect one's incorporation into the body of Christ. For Dunn, this takes place at 'conversion'.

Taking 2 Corinthians 3 as 'a crucial chapter in any attempt to understand Paul's pneumatology', Dunn argues that the ground is cut away from under the feet of the Pentecostals.[76] In the Corinthians narrative Paul speaks of 'the ministration' of the two covenants, Moses and Christ, the letter and the Spirit respectively. Paul's conclusion is that in Christ, there is no longer any mystification, bondage or death: in Christ 'the veil is done away with'; a new dispensation of 'liberty' is present and by the Spirit believers are 'changed into the same image from glory to glory'.[77] From this chapter, Dunn arrives at the following conclusions:

> ...there is no thought of a second gift of the Spirit. Indeed there cannot be. The Spirit is so much the essence and all of the new covenant in its application to mean that it is impossible to conceive of the new covenant apart from the Spirit, and impossible to experience the blessings of the new covenant apart from the indwelling of the Spirit. As the Jews' experience of the old covenant was wholly in terms of and wholly determined by the law, so the Christian experience of the new covenant is wholly in terms of and wholly determined by the Spirit. As obedience to the external law was the means by which the Jew maintained his relationship with

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[74] See Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, (preface). Dunn says that Pentecostals 'claim to have discovered the N.T. pattern of conversion-initiation –the only pattern which makes sense of the data in Acts'. (p.3.)

[75] Ibid., pp. 38-102; Kilian Mc Donnell and G.T. Montague, Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit, chapters 3,4,7.

[76] Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, pp. 3-4; see also Dunn's Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity, London, SCM Press:1977.

[77] Dunn, Baptism in the Spirit, pp.137-138.

> God, so obedience to the indwelling Spirit is the means by which the Christian maintains his relationship with God. To become a Jews was to take upon oneself the yoke of the law. To become a Christian is to receive the gift of the Spirit.[78]

Dunn's challenging thesis, and conclusion, that 'No Christian was without the Spirit, for only these who had (received) the Spirit were *ipso facto* Christians'; and that one is 'a Christian who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit by committing himself to the risen Jesus as Lord and who lives accordingly',[79] poses further questions concerning the interpretation of what should be considered 'normative', 'transitional', and 'cessational' in the phenomenon of Pentecost and apostolic pneumatology.

Pentecostals and Charismatics maintain that the apostolic experience of Charismatic manifestations are normative; as such they can be experienced by the Church today and should be anticipated by the believer even if these gifts are not directly mediated through the believer. However, J.F. MacArthur is concerned about the ponderosity given to Acts in regard to Spirit baptism, 'initial evidence' and the doctrine of 'subsequence' in Pentecostal and Charismatic theology to support what they see as 'normative' in the early Church. Accordingly, MacArthur argues that the 'only teaching in the Book of Acts that can be called normative (absolute) for the Church are those that are doctrinally confirmed elsewhere in Scripture'.[80]

MacArthur's exegesis is premised on that kind of methodological vigour and consistency which seeks to contextualize and systematize

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[78] Ibid., p. 136-137.

[79] Ibid., pp. 228-229.

biblical data in such a way that extra-biblical informants (including experience) do not impose themselves on the essential or manifest configuration of the text. This type of exegetical methodology allows the text, with its syntagmatic and paradigmatic features and other apparent contradictions and incongruities, to speak for themselves; the type of biblical interpretation[81] which insists that the text resides in the context of the whole, allowing for, in the first instance, a certain amount of internal textual fusion, resolution, and understanding, while at the same time guarding against the pretext of textual isolation on doctrinal and theological constructions founded upon, and sustained by, textual isolation.

To argue, as Pentecostals do, that 'speaking in tongues' and the experience of the Spirit baptism according to Acts 'are to be the normal experience of every Christian' is simply not borne out by the narrative of Acts. The issue is manifestly elementary for MacArthur:

> To say that the book of Acts presents the normal pattern for receiving the Holy Spirit is not even consistent with the Book of Acts...If tongues were to be the normal experience, why were there no tongues mentioned in Acts 8 when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit? Why does the text in Acts 2 through 4 not say that everyone who believed following Peter's sermon...and received the

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[80] John F. MacArthur, Jr, The Charismatics—A Doctrinal Perspective, Michigan, Lamplight Books:1978, p.85.

[81] See George W. Anderson, 'The History of Biblical Interpretation', in Charles M. Laymon (ed), The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, pp. 971-977; Jeff Purswell (ed), Wayne Grudem, Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press:1999; Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, Edinburgh, T & T Clarke: 1999 (edited by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, originally published in 1830) pp. 591-619; Adin Steinsaltz, The Essential Talmud, Basic Books:1976; Max Turner, 'Historical Criticism and Theological Hermeneutics of the New Testament' in Joel B. Green and Max Turner (ed), Between Two Horizons—Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology ,Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.:2000; Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans:1979 (translated by Grover Foley) pp.15-25; Colin Gunton et al, The Practice of Theology: A Reader, London, SCM Press: 2001,pp. 9-54.

> Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) also spoke in tongues? In order for something to be normative, it has to be common to everyone.[82]

Acts, argues MacArthur, should therefore be approach as an attempt to give 'a narrative, a report of what happened in this incredible period of transition as the church was born and established among all kinds of people',[83] rather than viewed as a treatise establishing 'normative' practices and experiences for all times.

This reading and understanding of Acts is, of course, contestable and Pentecostals inevitably view MacArthur's kind of hermeneutic as a perennial theme for refutations.[84] The following conclusion reached, therefore, by MacArthur is predictable:

> To claim that is the norm for people to believe in Christ and at a later time to get a 'baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues' is to lay on the Book of Acts a theological grid of one's own making. The events in the Book of Acts simply do not back up the Pentecostal Charismatic view. They may infer what they wish from the text, but the text does not consistently agree with their teaching. The basic point of the Book of Acts is that a new age began - the age of the Church. A new era began—the era of the Spirit. And we receive the Spirit when we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The Spirit itself is a gift from God. This is taught again and again in the Epistles of the New Testament. But in no New Testament epistle is there any teaching to substantiate the Pentecostal/Charismatic doctrine of a second work of grace which is evidenced by speaking in tongues.[85]

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[82] Op. cit., p.88; see also James Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity, London, SCM Press: 1977. Dunn discusses the problem of interpretation, orthodoxy, and the formulation of the 'truth': 'Quite clearly each understands and interprets the concept 'orthodoxy' in his own way. Even those who agree on one criterion of orthodoxy find interpretation a problem. For example, protestants have generally agreed that the Bible must have the central and fundamental role in determining faith and life (sola scriptura); but the fragmentation of Protestantism and Protestant sects demonstrates that no agreed orthodoxy has emerged.' (p.2)

[83] Ibid., p. 102.

[84] See William Caldwell, op cit. pp.22-35; French L. Arrington, 'The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals', PNEUMA, Vol. 16, Spring 1994, pp.101-107; Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., 'The Theological Challenge of Charismatic Spirituality' PNEUMA, Vol. 14, No. 2, Fall 1992, pp.185-197.

[85] Op. cit., pp.102-103.

For MacArthur, the Pentecostal understanding and practice of the Holy Spirit baptism is essentially a 'misinterpretation' of Peter's repetition of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28), as well as the symbolic purpose of the coming of the Spirit and the function of tongues.[86] Like all signs, argues MacArthur, the symbolism associated with the phenomenon of Pentecost 'pointed to something. Once the event came, the signs became superfluous. There is no indication they have returned'.[87] One of the difficulties with the MacArthur type argument, notwithstanding the sheer weight of those claiming Pentecostal/Charismatic experience, is the near dogmatic confidence with which so-called 'basic' points are reached; and, in the case of Dunn, where 'clarity of thought' is what is proposed to bring to bear on the debate in question as though these same points are what are supposedly lacking, or hitherto deficient.

The obvious problem with so-called 'basic' points, and the pursuit of conceptual clarity in theology and hermeneutics, is that one's so-called 'basic' point is another person's theological problematic, one's theological clarity another person's doctrinal and hermeneutical confusion. The 'basic' point, if there is one, is that theologies and theologizing are constructs of the mind informed by experience, religious imagination and the cultural-intellectual matrix of consciousness out of which our theologizing springs.[88] We articulate, mediate and manipulate what we

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[86] Ibid., pp.156-173.

[87] Ibid., p.173.

[88] See James Cone, God of the Oppressed, pp.39-107. Here Cone explores the relationship between biblical revelation and social existence, as well as the dialectic relationship between theology and ideology in the sociology of knowledge. Because

receive and perceive as being the signs, symbols, sacraments and 'icons of eternity'[89], to use Keith Ward's phrase, through the matrix of our developed consciousness.

In short, theology is an essay — a personal attempt to define, explain and answer questions of the divine-human encounter in recognizable cultural and linguistic forms. The product is a mental construct informed by norms, sources, experiences and paradigms; at best the construct is contingent and imaginative, at worst it is dangerous,

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Cone's 'Black Theology', for example, is predicated on the use of the black experience as a critical source for doing theology, the questions he raises may not be answered by 'traditional theology'. Accordingly, Cone argues in one of his seminal statements: ' We cannot afford to do theology unrelated to human existence. We cannot be 'objective', but must recognize, with Imamu Baraka, that 'there is no objective anything'—least of all theology. Our theology must emerge consciously from an investigation of the socioreligious experience of black people, as that experience is reflected in black stories of God's dealings with black people in the struggle for freedom... Tertullian's question, 'What... has Athens to do with Jerusalem? is not our central question. His concern was to state the primacy of faith in relation to reason on matters of theological discourse. We have another concern and this must rephrase that question in the light of our cultural history, asking: 'What has Africa to do with Jerusalem, and what difference does Jesus make for African people oppressed in North America?" (p.16) The linguistical and cultural determinants of theological constructs are both tools of appropriation and approximation of the centrality of theology's dual subjectivity: God-man, divine-human encounter. How this religious and anthropological phenomenon and encounter are explored depends on the personal and collective cultural and linguistic tools at our disposal. Theological constructs and biblical interpretation are all susceptible to 'missing the mark' (to sin); and the Foucaultian notion that the Christian is always to be 'supported by the light of faith if he wants to explore himself, and, conversely, access to the truth of the faith cannot be conceived of without purification of the soul', further relativizes the process of assessing theological 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy'. Knowledge of God and knowledge of self are culturally contingent; according to John Calvin the 'miserable ruin into which the first man has plunged us' means that 'man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God'. And given the fact that St Paul argues that 'we all see darkly through a glass' such lofty contemplation remains partial and contingent. See, Jeremy R. Carrette (ed), Religion and Culture by Michael Foucault, Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1999, p.170; John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company:1979, Vol.1, Chapter 1, pp.37-38; George Lindbeck, The Church in a Post liberal Age, (edited by James J. Buckley), London, SCM Press:2002 (especially chapter 13 'Scripture, Consensus, and Community', pp. 201-222); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics, Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press:2002, Schubert M. Ogden, 'What is Theology?' in Journal of Religion, 52: January 1972, pp.22-36; Colin E. Gunton et al, The Practice of Theology: A Reader, London, SCM Press:2001.

[89] See Keith Ward, A Vision to Pursue: Beyond the Crisis in Christianity, London, SCM Press: 1991.

'tribal'[90] and *perspectival*. The insight of Ian Ramsey is perhaps instructive here: Ramsey maintained that in matters 'theological' uncertainty is characteristic of the discourse; while in 'religion', the degree of uncertainty is not so acute.[91]

2.5 Precedent Theological Narratives and Pentecostal Pneumatology in Luke-Acts

In spite of the conflicting criteria we establish to determine that which characterizes the 'normative' in the New Testament in regard to speaking in tongues, and the meaning and purpose of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', a measure of hermeneutical bias, subjectivity, and competing theological paradigms will inevitably be employed, for the subject-matter is invariably far from obvious.[92] Part of the problem — and, consequently, part of the resolution — is the fact, as Menzies so clearly argues, that there does not appear to be a 'homogenous pneumatology in the early church, but rather the existence of a plurality in pneumatological perspectives'.[93]

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[90] David Jenkins, The Contradiction of Christianity, London, SCM Press:1976 (chapter 1 'Transcendence in the Midst and the Tribalism of Christian Traditions and Christian Theologies', pp.5-17. According to Paul Lehman, Christian theology 'is a compound of transcendence and humility': 'The transcendence for which such theology makes room signals the freedom of God in and over every theology. The humility, which breathes in and out of such a theology, signals a due awareness of the ambiguity and fragility of having the truth 'in earthen vessels (2. Cor.4: 7). This is why Calvin urged that the proscription of images set down in the second commandment includes also mental images. That is also why the pursuit of 'Christian' theology under that proscription preserves for theology the transcendence and humility, the distance and tentativeness which mark the difference between theology and ideology.' (See his 'Black Theology as 'Christian' Theology', in Gayraud S. Wilmore and Kames H. Cone (ed), BTDH, p.147.

[91] Ian T. Ramsey, Religious Language, London, SCM Press:1957.

[92] The Apostle Paul's description of our state of affairs, the corporeality and ontological provisionality of our existence, is an apt characterization of all theologizing and metaphysical strivings: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.' I Corinthians 13: 12.

[93] See Robert P. Menzies, The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press:1991.

Indeed, neither Luke nor Paul furnish transparent models[94] for our hermeneutical task; they were responding to urgent questions of historical, pastoral and theological concerns, under the understanding and heightened consciousness of the immanent '*parousia*' and eschatological fulfillment of the Kingdom.[95] While there are intimations and clues concerning Paul's and Luke's pneumatology and charismatic understanding of the nature of the new community, their emphasis and priorities appear to be different in degree and patterns *not* in kind.

Both assert that it is the coming of the Spirit that enables one to enter into, and remain within, the 'community of salvation'; for Luke with the advent of the Spirit, in characteristic Old Testament similitude, comes a 'prophetic endowment which enables its recipient to fulfill a particular task'.[96] This difference in emphasis has led R.B. Menzies to compartmentalize Paul and Luke's pneumatology as being 'soteriological' and 'prophetic' respectively.[97] The existence of pneumatological pluralism in the apostolic era makes the hermeneutical task to establish, or isolate, the 'normative' experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit that much more

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94 This is one of the arguments made by James Dunn. According to Dunn, it is important to get the 'Lucan balance' right in respect of pneumatology and what Dunn calls the 'model of churchmanship'. Not getting this balance right have usually led to traditions and interpretations 'been captivated by his early Catholicism... or by his enthusiasm', as reflected in the Pentecostal tradition of interpretation. (See his Unity & Diversity in the New Testament, p.365)

95 See Hans Schwarz, Eschatology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.:2000. Schwarz's excellent treatment of some of the dominant themes of eschatology, including the early Church's experience of the 'delay of the parousia' and the problematic and legitimation of liberation theology. See also Jürgen Moltmann, A Theology of Hope, London, SCM Press:1967; Alister E. McGrath (ed), The Christian Theology Reader, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.: 1995, pp.354-373; Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament, London, SCM Press: 1968, pp.307-317.

96 Menzies, op. cit., p. 316.

97 Ibid., pp.316-318.

elastic and problematic in the affirmation or refutation of the Pentecostal claim that baptism in the Holy Spirit was evidenced/accompanied by glossolalia, thereby establishing the norm.

Whether or not the Pentecostals are right in claiming that the accumulated evidence[98] of speaking in tongues in Acts establishes the pattern, and precedent, for its theology of the Spirit, the following points, as Ira J. Martin stated, would seem to support their principal contention of an experience *subsequent* to conversion. According to Martin, the following inferences can be drawn from the record of Acts. Firstly, 'glossolalia made its appearance in Christian circles coincidentally with the experience of being possessed by the Spirit'. Secondly, Peter's reference to Joel's (Acts 2:14-21) prophecy was cited 'to prove the connection of glossolalia with the outpouring of the Spirit'. Thirdly, with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost 'the possession of the Spirit became the highest standard of Christian experience, and ecstatic speech became the chief evidence of this possession—at least in some Christian circles'. Fourthly, and perhaps more importantly for the Pentecostal theology of 'initial evidence', Peter declares the promise (Acts 2:38) of the gift of the Spirit *after* baptism, and, although not explicitly stated, its manifestation in glossolalia.[99]

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98 See Lewis J. Willis, 'Glossolalia in Perspective' in Horton (ed) The Pentecostal Phenomenon, pp.259-263; Ira Jay Martin, 3rd, 'Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church' in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 63 (1944), p.124.

99 Ira Jay Martin, op. cit.; see also Dawson Walker, The Gift of Tongues, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark:1906. Walker makes a distinction between the phenomenon in Acts 2 and that in 1 Corinthians 12-14: the former is seen as 'divinely bestowed power of speaking in foreign languages', while the latter is interpreted as 'rapt ecstatic utterances' not 'necessarily involving the use of foreign languages'. (p.4.)

Interestingly enough, Martin, like many Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal commentators,[100] concede the inferential status of what Dunn calls the 'Riddle of Samaria'[101] in favour of the Pentecostal hermeneutic that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence or 'objective proof' of the Holy Spirit baptism:

> The statement that the Samaritan convert received the word gladly (8:4) and had been baptized by Philip (8:16) but had received the Holy Spirit (8:15, 16) indicates that an objective proof of the receipt of the Spirit (such as glossolalia) was expected, but lacking. Evidently the receipt of the Holy Spirit was to be clearly and objectively demonstrated and Peter may have regarded glossolalia as such proof.[102]

It is, however, recognized that Acts 4:31 does not fit neatly into a Pentecostal pattern, or precedent for its theology of spirit baptism. Adolf Harnack[103] believed this passage to be a 'doubtlet' or an abbreviated record of similar experience to the one recorded in Acts 2: whereas the former narrative states that they 'spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance', the latter merely records that 'the place was shaken when they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness'.

Although glossolalia is not specifically mentioned in Acts 4:2, Martin says that 'we may assume that some of the speaking was

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100 See B.C. Aker, op. cit.; S. M. Horton, 'Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', in DPCM, pp.410-417; Larry Christenson, Speaking in Tongues, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Bethany House Publishers:1987 (originally published in 1968), pp.30-70; T. W. Walker, 'The Baptism in the Holy Spirit', in P.S. Brewster, op. cit., pp.27-44.

101 Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, pp. 55-72.

102 Ibid., p.125.

103 Alferd Harnack, The Acts of the Apostles, translated by Revd J.R. Wilkenson, New York, Putman:1908 pp.179-183, 188-189; see also Marshall, op. cit., p.200.

ecstatic'.[104] And while it is argued that Paul, some twenty five years after Pentecost, used 'skillful diplomacy' to restrict, regulate and almost eliminated glossolalia from public worship and service,[105] Martin maintains from Luke's narrative the critical role of glossolalia:

> We may infer that tonguespeech was becoming the criterion whereby Gentile converts were recognized worthy of baptism and admitted to membership into the Christian fellowship: it seems to have been the final proof of the presence of the Spirit.[106]

That there are, as Marshall points out, 'several anomalies' in the record of Acts concerning the mode of Spirit baptism, complicates the issue and militates against hermeneutical hegemony and any attempt to superimpose a theological paradigm which closes, as it were, the universe of discourse unequivocally in favour of *one* particular doctrine, or theology of the Holy Spirit.

The recognition of competing theologies, and the existence of a biblically internal plurality of pneumatological emphasis, suggests a dynamic progression and creative dialectic in both the operation and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit which is an attempt to hermeneutically '*feel after*' the spirit with theological constructs, creeds and dogmas. These creeds and constructs, as imaginative as they are in Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal traditions, are not expansive enough to sufficiently deal with the *phenomenon* of the Holy Spirit's dynamism and creative diversity in regard to the 'charisms', divine encounters, or experiences of Holy Spirit baptism. The question raised by Nicodemas, namely, 'How can one

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104 Ira Jay Martin, op. cit., p.125.

105 Ibid., 129-130.

106 Ibid., p.125.

be born again?' is essentially the essence of the pneumatological problem. 'How can these things be?' in regard to being born of the Spirit is the question that is asked and answered in experience and in theology. The phenomenon of the Holy Spirit means that our mental and theological matrix, paradigms and epistemological constructs must have a built-in measure of elasticity to cope with the aesthetics and metaphor of 'the wind'. Jesus, says John, stated: 'Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit (John 3: 8). The wind of the divine Spirit announces the possibility, as Tillich argues, of 'participating in the transcendent unity', the inauguration of a new 'Spiritual Community' in which the 'Spiritual Presence is received and the New Being actualised'.[107]

What is normative, transitional or cessational in the early Church is contestable theologically and experientially, especially in the light of some of the manifest 'anomalies' and discrepancy. However, what is critical, as Marshall insightfully points out, is that *every believer 'possesses the Spirit'* i.e., the possession of the Holy Spirit is the 'common gift which constitutes the Church, and water baptism is the outward symbol of integration in the Church:[108]

> The assumption that reception of the Spirit is the decisive indication that a man is a Christian is basic to the theology of Paul, John and Peter; it is axiomatic that a believer possesses the Spirit: 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him' (Rom. 8:9) is a statement that would be confirmed by any of the New Testament writers. The difference between Luke and the

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[107] See Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Life in the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God, Digswell Place, Herts, James Nisbet & Company: 1964, Vol. 3, pp.184-185

[108] I. Howard Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, Exeter, The Paternoster Press: 1970, pp. 202-204.

rest of the New Testament should not, therefore, be pressed too sharply.[109]

The attestation to Spirit incorporation into the Church— the body of Christ— is not the issue at stake. Indeed, the metaphor of 'the wind' alluded to by Christ in John's Gospel (3:8) implies a radical transformation. (Paul says that it is a 'translation into the kingdom of His dear son[110]'— a new spiritual reality of profound eschatological significance.) Rather, what is at stake is the implication and conclusions drawn by Pentecostals, and their critics, from the distinct and plural modalities of Spirit baptism and the operation of 'spiritual gifts', as encountered in the narratives and *sitz im leben* of the apostolic era.

Pentecostals maintain that the Book of Acts legitimizes their claim that receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, constitutes 'normative' experience of incorporation into the Church. Some of their critics argue that the insufficiency of this pattern from the Luke-Acts narratives themselves renders this thesis, firstly, a doubtful one in establishing the 'normative'; and, secondly, since the New Testament depicts a community in transition (MacArthur), to the extent that there is a downgrading[111] of the Charismatic manifestation of tongues in the

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[109] Ibid., p.198.

[110] See Colossians 1:12-13.

[111] Ronald E. Baxter, Charismatic Gift of Tongues, Michigan, Kregel Publications: 1981. Baxter argues that the Pentecostal belief of speaking in tongues—initial evidence or otherwise—has 'nothing to do with the baptism with the Holy Spirit' (p.31), for biblical 'tongues have ceased' (p.55). See also B. B. Warfield, Counterfeit Miracles, London, Banner of Truth Trust:1972 (originally published in 1918). Warfield is a cessationist, arguing that charismatic gifts were 'the characterizing peculiarity of specifically the Apostolic church, and it belonged, therefore, exclusively to the Apostolic age'. (pp.5-6) Richard B Gaffin, Jr. argues: '...the baptism with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is a unique event of epochal significance in the history of redemption. Therefore it is no more capable of being repeated or serving as a model for individual Christian

Pauline epistles, it is further doubtful whether the Pentecostal theology of glossolalia, and its concomitant doctrine of 'initial evidence', is either a necessary or sufficient corollary, experience or practice, to explain Holy Spirit baptism or incorporation. Indeed, the fundamental question is whether being 'baptized in the Holy Spirit' has a radically different, and non-glossolaliac basis, as hitherto claimed by Pentecostals.

2.6 The Cessation of Pentecostal and Charismatic Practices — Development or Delusion?

The argument that the *charisms* of the New Testament era have ceased, and the consequential invalidation of the Pentecostal hermeneutic and witness to the Holy Spirit baptism evidence by glossolalia, is championed by an impressive school of religious and theological writers.[112] And while the corpus of literature is growing voluminous, the critique is essentially the same, setting out to demonstrate either one or more of the following:

(a) The Pentecostals are sincere believers, but they are sincerely wrong.

(b) The gifts of the Spirit were operational in the Apostolic era but have since ceased.

(c) The Pentecostal practice and experience of glossolalia is not of the Holy Spirit: it is

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experience than are the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, with which it is so integrally conjoined as part of a single complex of events...' See his Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing House:1979, p.22.

[112] Donald W. Burdick, Tongues: To Speak or Not to Speak, Chicago, The Moody Bible Institute:1969; Merrill Unger, New Testament Teaching on Tongues, Grand Rapids, Kregel: 1972; Frank W. Beare, 'Speaking With Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence', in Journal of Biblical Literature, 83, September 1964, pp.229-246.

either a product of the mind/psyche or, by

implication, a product of Satan.

Both St. Augustine and John Chrysostom were of the opinion that the charisms of the apostolic era had ceased. And the cessation was firmly based on the lack of any empirical signs or contemporaneous manifestations to which authenticity or credibility could be attached. Chrysostom maintained that the phenomenon of Pentecost with the outpouring of glossolalia was God's bestowal of 'some sensible proof of that energy' of the Spirit.[113] In commenting upon 1 Corinthians 12 he states:

> This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more? [114]

The Augustinian view is that glossolalia of the apostolic era was a *unique* and specific manifestation of the Spirit, demonstrating the universality of the gospel. In his commentary on 1 John he argued:

> In the earliest times, 'The Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed and they spoke with tongues which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance'. These were signs adapted to the time. For there behoved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away.[115]

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[113] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians (Homily XXIX) in Philip Schaff (ed), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol XII, Edinburgh, T&T Clarke and WM. B Eerdman Publishing Company:1997. p.168.

[114] Ibid., p.168. Chrysostom's treatment of the 'manifestation of the Spirit'—the charisms—indicates the danger inherent in those who are spiritual immature, yet possess multiple spiritual gifts: 'To receive more than one has ability to bear, this rather is unprofitable, and injurious, and a fit cause of dejection.'(p.171)

[115] See Augustine, 'Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John', translated by H. Brown, Vol. 7, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, (Hom. 6:10).

The adaptation of the charismatic phenomenon for the early, and transitional period of the church, defined both the function and the theological meaning of the phenomenon before its cessation in Augustine's thinking.

Although the theological argument advanced by Augustine identifies the specific function of the *charisms* of the Holy Spirit in regard to speaking in tongues with the universal nature of the gospel and the temporary nature of early symbolic and physical manifestation, on the one hand, and Chrysostom's argument from obscurity and empirical observation, on the other hand, there were periodic and sporadic outbursts of glossolalia and other charismatic manifestations. Often the data on charismatic outbursts in ecclesiastical history is mediated by critics and opponents of these movements and their leaders.

The Pentecostal movement is often referred to as a modern form of Montanism.[116] Eusebius reported on the Phrygian convert who, in his unbridled ambition to reach the top, laid himself open to the adversary. Montanus and his band of false prophets were possessed with 'spiritual excitement'; and their unseemly behaviour and 'unnatural ecstasy', according to the report, led to their final excommunication. In one of his classic statements Eusebius describes this graphically:

> He raved and began to chatter and talk nonsense prophesying in a way that conflicted with the practice of the Church handed down generation by generation from the beginning. Of those who listening at that time to his sham utterances some were annoyed, regarding him as possessed, a demoniac in the grip of a spirit of error, a disturber of the masses. They rebuked him and tried to

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[116] See Morton Kelsey, Tongue Speaking, (see chapter 2).

stop his chatter, remembering the distinction drawn by the Lord, and His warning to guard vigilantly against the coming of false prophets. Others were elated as if by the Holy Spirit or a prophetic gift, were filled with conceit... They welcomed a spirit that injured and deluded the mind and led the people astray: they were beguiled and deceived by it, so that it could not be reduced to silence. By some art, or rather by methodical use of a malign artifice, the devil contrived the ruin of the disobedient...then he stirred up and inflamed minds closed to the true Faith, raising up in this way two others—women whom he filled with the sham spirit, so that they chattered crazily, inopportunely, and wildly like Montanus himself...They were taught by this arrogant spirit to denigrate the entire Catholic Church throughout the world, because the Spirit of pseudo-prophecy received neither honour nor admission into it...Then at last its devotees were turned out of the Church and excommunicated.[117]

Like Pentecostals, Montanus placed great importance on the Spirit and his/its charismatic manifestation, especially the gift of prophecy and glossolalia.[118] Although the account given by Eusebius portrays a negative picture of Montanus and his followers, the views of Irenaeus and Tertullian are somewhat different. Indeed, Tertullian in his Montanistic works describes the Montanists as the 'Church of the Spirit'.[119] And Irenaeus testified that manifestations of charismatic phenomenon were evident in his day:

> In the manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kind of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit of the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God...[120]

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[117] Eusebius, The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, translated by G.A. Williamson, Middlesex, Penguin Books:1965, pp. 218-219.

[118] Morton Kelsey, Tongue Speaking, p.34.

[119] See H.B. Swete, op. cit., p.392.

[120] Cited in Kelsey op. cit., p36.

The cessationist argument[121] that the charisms were unique to the apostolic age may be viewed as a theological construct without sufficient historical verification and testimony, either from the ante-Nicene or the post-Nicene commentators. The evidence of the church fathers, even those writing from the vantage point of 'orthodoxy' vis-à-vis perceived 'heresies', suggests charismatic activity, albeit on a marginal level. The witness of ecclesiastical history, incomplete as it is, has led many to conclude that the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have theological antecedents in other movements where the charismatic and pneumatological dimensions have a singular preponderance in the life of the believer, and in Christian anthropology.[122]

J. Laporte argued that charisms were frequent not only in the early church, but that their manifestation in Montanism present 'a very interesting test case for the theology of the Spirit':

> I would give it a positive evaluation, although it turned into a sect. Even in this regard, it is a precious witness to the freedom of the Spirit of God, who may inspire sectarians, as we have seen in the case of Tertullian.[123]

One of the earlier theological polemics against the Pentecostal movement and its initial evidence teachings came from John Matthews in 1925.

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[121] See Herbert Carson, Spiritual Gifts for Today? , Eastbourne, Kingsway Publicatrions:1987; Lewis J. Willis, 'Glossolalia in Perspective', in Charles W. Conn (ed) The Glossolalia Phenomenon, pp. 247-284; R.P. Spittler, 'Glossolalia', in DPCM, pp.335-241; Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, J. T. Stoddart and James Moffatt (ed), The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts, Vol.2 Part I, Michigan, Baker Book House: 1978, pp. 366-377; George E. Gardiner, The Corinthian Catastrophe, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel Publications:1974.

[122] See Jean Laporte, 'The Holy Spirit, Source of Life and Activity According to the Early Church' in Edward D. O'Connor (ed), op. cit.

[123] Ibid., pp.61-62; see also Louis Bouyer, ' Some Charismatic Movements in the History of the Church in Edward D. O'Connor (ed), Charismatic Renewal; E. Glenn Hinson,

Matthews argued against the doctrinal thrust of the movement, and especially against the initial evidence thesis — what he referred to as the 'sole evidence'.[124] In his introductory remarks Matthews stated:

> Wherever and whenever the Spirit of God has been poured forth in unusual measure, 'tongues' has occasionally sprung up, only to run its course, ruin its victims and before long, wither and die; later to be revived by some other deceived religious enthusiast, who finds a few followers, forms a cults, gathers a crowd, creates a passing furor, reaps in the money and property of its adherents and sinks again from sight, like foaming white caps on frothing ocean waves.[125]

In his unrestrained and subjective invective on the new movement, Matthews likens the Pentecostals and their emphasis on tongues to 'some ancient plague'[126] which has thrust itself into the Christian. While the Pentecostals were arguing for, and witnessing to, the continuation of the Pentecostal outpouring of the 'latter Rain experience', Matthews insisted that 'Pentecost can have no repetition'.[127] Matthews, therefore, concluded:

> Modern tongues carries within its own bosom some evidences of something supernatural, or outside the realm of ordinary human religious experience; but that supernaturalness is not of God... Tongues is a selfish, self-centered, loveless, factious, raucous, clogging, warring, insubordinate, egotistic, unintelligent, puffed up, dependent, without significance, noisy, meaningless, unedifying, unfruitful; disorderly, barbaric, confusing, self-inflated, destructive of fellowship, without comfort or consolation, with no edification to believers and causing the outside one to scoff and designate the whole assembly as 'mad'.[128]

'The Significance of Glossolalia in the History of Christianity', in Watson E. Mills (ed) Speaking in Tongues, pp.181-219.

[124] John Matthews, Speaking in Tongues, Kansas: 1925.

[125] Ibid., p.5. One wonders at whom Matthews' criticisms were leveled. Was he thinking of Sandford? Or probably Dowie? See E.L. Blumhofer's article on John Alexander Dowie in DPCM,pp.248-249.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., p.23.

[128] Ibid., p.131-135.

Elements of Matthews' critique, albeit with greater theological sophistication, and with the aid of psychological and linguistical tools, are echoed in other writers.[129] B. B. Warfield was more judicious in the language of his criticism of his contemporaries and others who claimed charismatic manifestations and practices.[130] Warfield concedes that the apostolic church was characteristically a miracle-working church, but that the charismata had ceased with the apostles, for whom its manifestation had an authentication function. The cessationist question is asked and answered by Warfield thus:

> How long did this state of things continue? It was the characterizing peculiarity of specifically the Apostolic Church, and it belonged therefore exclusively to the Apostolic age—although no doubt this designation maybe with some latitude...they [the gifts] were distinctly the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the Church. Their function thus confined them distinctively to the Apostolic Church and they necessarily passed away with it. Of this we may make sure on the ground both of principle and of fact. That is to say both under the guidance of the New Testament teaching as to their origin and nature, and on the credit of the testimony of later ages as to their cessation.[131]

The cessation theme in Warfield, and the Pentecostal susceptibility to psychological/demonic influence, is also found in the works of C.H. Lang, whose criticisms surfaced in the early decades of the Pentecostal

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[129] See John Kildahl, The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues, London, Hodder & Stoughton:1972. Kildahl emphasizes the preoccupation and divisiveness of glossolalia: 'Tongue-speakers band together...The presence of persons who speak in tongues, and of groups of tongue-speakers who psychologically band together, usually create a disturbance in the mainline Protestant congregations we studied...A further characteristic of glossolalic group behaviour was a preoccupation with their special endowment. It was very difficult for those who had undergone this experience not to give it a central place in life and spend time trying to understand it. Very few new tongue-speakers were able to be circumspect about their experience—rather they become salesmen for it (p.72).

[130] See B.B. Warfield, Counterfeit Miracles, London, Banner of Truth Trust:1972 (first published in 1918.

movement. Lang was convinced after 'patient examination and long reflection' that the emergence of the Pentecost movement — 'this strange movement' — was, on the whole, 'of satanic and not divine origin'.[132] In yielding to an influence which they think to be 'Divine' the Pentecostals are, according to Lang, honest and conscientious, but they are misguided about tongues and the 'indispensable evidence' of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.[133]

In the works of Hayes and Torrey, writing in 1913 and 1910 respectively, one finds a sympathetic and attentive treatment of the issue — a move away from the near *pathological* thesis of Lang and the cessationist theology of Warfield concerning apostolic charisms. Recognizing something of the 'supernatural' nature of the phenomenon of Pentecost and its continuation in the early Church, Hayes agreed that the glossolalia which took place in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Corinth and Ephesus, was not confined to the apostolic period but has been 'repeated again and again in Church history'.[134]

There is no general support in Hayes for the 'initial evidence' thesis; he does, however, maintain, on the one hand, that tongues are of 'proportionate value' while, on the other hand, appealing for their 'orderly and edifying use'.[135] Although Hayes is much more sympathetic to the Pentecostal/ 'Tongues movement' than Warfield and Lang, he is at odds

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[131] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[132] C.H. Lang, The Modern Gift of Tongues: Whence Is it?, Marshall Brothers Ltd., nd., pp.9-10.

[133] Ibid., p.74.

[134] See D. A. Hayes, The Gift of Tongues, Jennings & Graham:1913, p.48.

[135] Ibid., p.106.

theologically and pastorally with the Pentecostal distinctive of glossolalia and, by implication, the priority and doctrinal hegemony of the initial evidence thesis in classical Pentecostalism. In arriving at a position regarding charismatic manifestations, Hayes adopts the Wesleyan maxim:

> The shadow is no disparagement of the substance, nor the counterfeit of the real diamond.[136]

This pragmatic approval of Wesley's maxim concerning charism betrays Hayes' openness to the possibility, and authenticity, of charismatic phenomenon and experience. However, his 'best general attitude' while suggesting a theoretical liberalism does not translate easily into Christian experience or liturgical practice, notwithstanding the 'proportionate value' accorded the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Pentecostals can draw little comfort from Hayes' principled stance. Even though Hayes insists that 'love' should control and abide in all encounters with the tongues phenomenon, his essential thesis amounts to what Pentecostals would call 'quenching the Spirit', a dissimilar conclusion to the one expressly advised and arrived at by St. Paul.[137]

Hayes wants the gift of tongues to be recognized as a possible paraphernalia of Christian experience, but also advocates its proscription:

> The gift of tongues must be recognized as a possible accompaniment of any ecstatic Christian or pagan experience. It should never be allowed to become the prominent feature of any

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136 Cited in Hayes op. cit., p.105 (see John Wesley, Journal Vol.IV. p.49, Sunday 25 Nov. 1759).

137 In his letter to the Thessalonians St Paul writes: 'Quench not the Spirit' (I Thes.5:19). Chrysostom interprets 'the Spirit' in this text as 'the gift of grace', arguing that it was St Paul's 'custom so to call the gift of the Spirit'. Accordingly, to 'cast over it earthly things, and the cares of fluctuating matters, you have quenched the Spirit'. Chrysostom, in loco, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. Xlll, Philip Schaff (ed), Edinburgh, T & T Clarke:1994.

> Christian movement. It must be discouraged under all normal conditions everywhere. In the Church of today it is less a blessing to be desired than an affliction to be endured. Let it cease as soon as may be; but let love abide in all our dealings with it. 'Whether there be tongues, they shall cease...But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love'.[138]

And while appending Paul's famous Corinthian exhortation to his views has the appearance of legitimizing Hayes' position, it is premised on the cessationist notion that the permanency of the trinity of *faith*, *hope* and *love* undermines the transitory nature of 'tongues' (prophecies and knowledge would also be included) when 'that which is perfect is come', (1 Cor 13:10).

This view, at best an imaginative, though contestable, theological construction, has led many to conclude that the charisms of the New Testament became redundant with the coming and formation of the New Testament canon,[139] even though the injunction in Chapter 14 is a judicious admixture of the two: the admonition to 'follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts'.

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[138] Op. cit., pp.118-119.

[139] M. Unger, New Testament Teaching on Tongues, pp.111-118.

2.7 Anti-Charismatic Polemic and Pentecostalism - Beyond 'Initial Evidence' and Tribal Marks of Differentiation

The initial evidence thesis that characterized early Pentecostalism, and still informs neo-Pentecostal teaching, functions as the controlling theological stronghold and norm in Pentecostal polemics.[140] According to Hollenweger, it functions as a 'tribal mark' differentiating the church from the hostile tribes of the world.[141] The view that 'glossolalia is concomitant with the Baptism of the Holy Ghost as an evidential and devotional manifestation;[142] and that the Pentecostal phenomenon recorded in the book of Acts 'embodied far-ranging historical roots, as well as a definitive pattern for the future',[143] constitutes what one may call the superlative of Pentecostal dogmatics.

The wide-ranging ecumenical and theological implications of this Pentecostal dogmatics are sharpened by the theo-religious debate and the constant flow of inter-denominational critiques. Parnell had questioned the sufficiency of speaking in tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism not only on the grounds of Paul's question to the Corinthians: 'Do all speak in tongues' (1 Cor. 12:30), but also on the grounds that speaking in

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140 Joel Shuman, 'Toward a Cultural-Linguistic Account of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit', PNEUMA, Vol.19, No.2 Fall:1997. Schman makes problematic the nature of experience in validating the phenomenon of glossolalia, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, maintaining the possibility of experiential compatibility with 'objective truth' in the Scriptures. 'One cannot simply validate the reality of glossolalia by claiming to have experienced it; neither, however, can one deny that the experience of another is not compatible with object truth as presented in Scripture. (p.219); Phyllis Thompson (sermon at Mile End New Testament Church of God, Sunday, 28 July 2002 re-emphasized the historic and 'experiential Pentecost which our church—the Church of God affirms in its *Doctrinal Commitments*".

141 Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, p.485.

142 See Lewis J. Willis, 'Glossolalia in Perspective' in Wade Horton (ed) op. cit., p.283.

143 L. Thomas Holdcroft, op cit., p.93; see also T.W. Walker, 'The Baptism in the Holy Spirit' in P.S. Brewster (ed), Pentecostal Doctrine, Cardiff, Brewster: 1976, pp.27-37.

tongues can be found among non-Christians, including Hindus, Zulus and Spiritualists.[144]

There is the suggestion, according to Parnell, of a basic hermeneutic position in the debate which, partially, resolves the difficulty by understanding Paul's fundamental point on the profusion of charisms from the Holy Spirit. In Corinthians 12:3 Paul states:

> Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Parnell uses this text to assert that a man speaking by, or in, the Spirit of God, *always* says 'Jesus is Lord'. This confession of Christ, according to Parnell, is 'a sure sign — a sign which invariably occurs — that one has received the Holy Spirit.[145] The truce that was called for many years ago between the Pentecostals/Charismatics and non-Charismatics[146] appears to be yielding a modest dividend of toleration[147] - a new *modus vivendi* among Christians.

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[144] Parnell op. cit., p.17; Kilian McDonnell, the Benedictine, adopts a radical view: he sees no reason to limit the work of the Holy Spirit to Christians: 'Even the speaking in tongues to be found among pagans cannot a priori be excluded from the working of the Holy Spirit.' (K. McDonnell, Worship 40/10. Dec.1966 p.611, cited in Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, p.343.

[145] Op. cit., pp.18-19; see also John Rea, The Holy Spirit in the Bible, London, Marshall Pickering:1992, p.145.

[146] See Michael Harper, These Wonderful Gifts, London, Hodder & Stoughton:1989; Andrew Walker, 'The Theology of the 'Restoration' House Churches', in David Martin and Peter Mullen (ed), Strange Gifts? A Guide to Charismatic Renewal, Oxford, Basil Blackwell:1984; William G. MacDonald, 'The Place of Glossolalia in Neo-Pentecostalism', in Watson E. Mills, op. cit., pp.221-234; P. D. Hocken, 'The Charismatic Movement', in DPCM, pp.130-160; Kilian McDonnell, 'Improbable Coversations: The International Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue, PNEUMA, Vol.17. No. 2, Fall:1995, pp.163-188.

[147] Julien Ward, 'Pentecostal Theology and the Charismatic Movement', in David Martin and Peter Mullen, op. cit., pp. 192-207.

Amidst this new spirit, partly due to what may be termed the charismaticization[148] of the established churches, there still exists the radical anti-Pentecostal/charismatic polemic of writers such as Masters, Whitcomb, Budgen, Unger and Hoekema. For these critics of the Pentecostal distinctive of glossolalia, either as a gift of the Holy Spirit or as the initial evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion, is a departure from biblical teaching and is theologically unsound. A. A. Hoekema states unequivocally that there is:

> no scriptural evidence whatever that speaking with tongues is proof of one's 'baptism in the Spirit'. Neither is there any biblical proof for the contention that tongues-speaking is a special source of spiritual power indispensable to full-orbed Christian living. If a person attaches either of these two values to tongue-speaking, he is making claims for this gift which the Scriptures do not warrant.[149]

Budgen's major contention is that the fake teaching and 'manipulative theology' espoused by Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals on speaking in tongues[150] 'is largely a move away from the close and detailed study of the Word of God'.[151] The claim by Budgen that Pentecostal theology and practice downgrades[152] and trivializes the word of God finds resonance in the Masters-Whitcomb theological axis. According to Masters and Whitcomb, Pentecostals and Charismatics are guilty of a

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148 Michael Harper, op. cit.; Jeffrey Gros, 'Toward a Dialogue of Conversation: The Pentecostal, Evangelical and Conciliar Movements' in PNEUMA, Vol. 17, No. 2, Fall:1995, pp. 189-201; Roger Foster (ed), Ten New Churches, Suffolk, Marc Europe:1986; Ian M. Randall, 'Old Time Power: Relationships between Pentecostalism and Evangelical Spirituality in England', in PNEUMA, Vol. 19, No.1, Spring:1997, pp.53-80.

149 A.A. Hoekema, Holy Spirit Baptism, London, The Pasternoster Press: 1972, pp.53-54.

150 Victor Budgen, The Charismatics and the Word of God, London, Evangelical Press:1985, p.73.

151 Ibid., p.85.

152 Ibid., pp.223-239.

litany of biblical and theological deviations, placing some of them in 'snares of satan'[153]; for not only have they departed from the Bible,[154] they have also by-passed the mind in not worshipping in 'spirit and truth'[155] as Jesus urged in John 4:23.

The sincere but naïve Pentecostals and Charismatics — oblivious of the fact, says Unger, 'of the possibility of demonic delusions'[156] — must be saved from themselves. Accordingly, Masters and Whitcomb argue:

> We must try to save from this dangerous delusion those earnest believers who have succumbed to Charismatic ideas.[157]

Pentecostal pneumatology is, as argued above, based primarily on the Acts narrative and the belief in the charismatic *continuation* referred to in Acts 2:38, 39; and while the cessationist argument is, at best, theologically inconclusive in regard to speaking in tongues and other charisms of the Holy Spirit, there is, as Hollenweger maintains, a real difficulty facing the Reformation churches in attempting to reject or ridicule speaking in tongues either as pathological, demonically inspired or as an expression of the 'collective psyche' in Jungian terms.

Having spent over two decades among Pentecostals, observing their traditions and participating in a range of Pentecostal and

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153 Peter Masters and John C. Whitcomb, The Charismatic Phenomenon, London, The Wakeman Trust: 1982, p.110.

154 Ibid., p.10.

155 Ibid., p.62.

156 See Merrill F. Unger, New Testament Teaching on Tongues, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel Publications: 1971, pp.162-164. In arguing that the last days will be characterized by an increase in demonic activity. J. Foster Crane asks the question: 'Is the Charismatic movement a vast Satanic deception permitted by God to test gentile Christendom and to prepare the way for the coming of anti-Christ and Babylon of the last days? Time will tell.' (See his 'Twenty Reasons Why I Neither Seek nor Desire the Present-Day Gift of 'Tongues', Auckland, N.Z.: nd, pp.17-18.)

Charismatic rituals and practices (including experiencing glossolalia), I have not experienced anything in this tradition that is at variance with New Testament practice. Pentecostals who 'speak in tongues' do not necessarily need to be *delivered* from the 'power of darkness' or fear that they are, as Masters and Whitcomb argue, going 'down a false and dangerous path, because it is a psychological substitute for a supernatural experience'.[158] Where deliverance is needed among Pentecostals is in privileging glossolalia— making it superlative— above other modes of Christian experience, modalities and existence. The psychology and subjectivity of charismatic and ecstatic phenomenon, renders glossolalia, and other *charisms* of the Spirit, open to critical discernment and hermeneutical scrutiny, but this subjectivity should not legitimize their marginalization or extermination in the life of the Church. Indeed, religious subjectivity, undoubtedly, takes one into the realm of 'feeling' and what William James describes as 'the deeper source of religion', beyond the secondary products of 'philosophical and theological formulas'.[159]

In view of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 14:39 and 1 Cor. 14:4 on tongues and its function in personal edification respectively, one needs to have, argues Hollenweger, 'very strong reasons to deny the wholesome effect of speaking in tongues'.[160] Classical Pentecostal pneumatology and the doctrine of 'initial evidence' are theologically and experientially

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[157] Op. cit., p.70.

[158] Peter Masters and John Whitcomb, op. cit., pp.110-111.

[159] See William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, Glasgow, Fount Paperbacks:1977, pp.414-415.

[160] Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, p. 343.

inseparable;[161] they have become the distinctive sign and symbol of Pentecostalism. According to Joel Edwards, these Pentecostal symbols have become the line of demarcation between 'those who have it' and 'those who don't'.[162] Pentecostals, says Edwards, have a 'clear challenge to help churches grow beyond the mark of the *initial evidence* of the Holy Spirit to the *substantial evidence* of Spirit filled life'.

Herein lies the real difficulty, and ecumenical challenge, which can only be adequately resolved soteriologically: in arguing that 'Pentecostalism has a right to insist on the importance' of the experience of glossolalia and the doctrine of 'initial evidence',[163] there will always be a danger that this 'Pentecostal distinctive' will continue to perform an exclusionary function, notwithstanding Edwards' plea for a mature and responsible form of Pentecostalism: one which balances Pentecostal doctrinal imperatives in the hermeneutical heterogeneity of theology with the broader ecumenical 'responsibility to avoid a two-tier system of Christianity separating those who have spoken in tongues and those who do not'.[164]

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161 See J.Massyngbaerde Forde, 'Towards a Theology of 'Speaking in Tongues'', in Watson E. Mills (ed), Speaking in Tongues, pp.263-294.

162 Joel Edwards, Let's Praise Him Again: An African Caribbean Perspective On Worship, Eastbourne, Kingsway Publication: 1992

163 Ibid

164 Ibid., p.85. There is much autobiography in Edwards' theology. Edwards grew up in a traditional 'Black-led' Pentecostal church; he rose to become one of its prominent leaders before becoming the General Director of the Evangelical Alliance. Given the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith, and the nature of the GD's role, it would be difficult for a black Pentecostal (any minister for that case) leader to lead such an Alliance without the firm commitment to a historic tradition, on the one hand, and a hermeneutical conviction characteristically elastic for the organization's growth and maintenance, on the other hand, displayed by Edwards. Ultimately, Edwards is much more concerned with the vitality of Pentecostal spirituality—'fruit bearing', rather than 'dynamic manifestations': developing proper safeguards allowing one 'open the windows without letting in the flies'. (Ibid., p.87.)

Glossolalia, like the contribution of African Americans to the modern religious landscape, have reminded Christendom of the *presence* of 'the Spirit' not so much as a theological concept for learned abstraction and contemplation, but rather as a gift of *appropriation* and empowerment. In the Church of God this tradition of appropriation and empowerment is dominant in both black and white congregations. Some churches still have what are called 'tarrying services'—i.e., special prayer meetings where members 'wait' to receive the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of glossolalia. As 'speech about God', Pentecostals have made the place and phenomenon of glossolalia relevant and challenging to all traditions of the Church. This is recognized by Mills:

> All Christians ought to recognize that there is a relevant place for the Spirit of God in the Church today. The various Pentecostal (churches) sects and others who manifest glossolalia have chosen not to suppress 'speech about God'. They are seeking to give meaning and content to their belief that God's Spirit moves simultaneously in the church and in individual's lives. In terms of the individual, the Spirit's unique work is the endowing of the individual with specific gifts...Thus the various Pentecostal groups have forced the more 'respectable' denominations to take a hard look at their doctrine of the Holy Spirit.[165]

In Pentecostal theology, there is the manifest danger[166] of being soteriologically conditioned and determined by pneumatology; and the

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[165] .Watson E. Mills, 'Reconstruction and Reappraisal' in Watson E. Mills (ed) op. cit., p.338.

[166] See Ira Jay Martin, 3rd, 'Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church' in Journal of Biblical Literature, 63 (1944), pp.123-130. Martin concludes: 'Paul saw it as a threat to the Christian cause and experience. The glorification of ecstatic speech above all other manifestations of the Spirit was denounced by Paul because glossolalia proved the presence of Spirit by outward signs lacking intrinsic value, useless for preaching the faith, and unessential for building it up; because it 'puffed up' with vanity the ecstatic (1 Cor.13), without contributing to the edification of others and expressing Christian love. Converts must have the Spirit and must show forth the same (Gal 5:16-26), primarily in love, the greatest of all charismata (1 Cor. 13:13)...As the test for the indwelling of the Spirit—hence, of Christian experience—glossolalia for Paul was dangerous.' (p.130)

tenacity with which the polemics on both sides are articulated suggests that unless a new Pentecostal theological paradigm is constructed around the meaning of *being* a Christian, and the metaphor of the wind alluded to by Jesus in John 3:8, the debate will continue to be a theologically polarized one, reducing the possibility for new encounters and pneumatological disclosure of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three - Black Theology of James Cone — Religion, Politics and the Hermeneutics of Liberation

3.0 The Origins of 'Black Theology'

This chapter will focus on the early writings of James Cone from 1969-1975. This period marks the development and critical expansion of Cone's theology and its major themes and challenges. The theological issues outlined by Cone and their relevance for the black community and black British Pentecostal theologians, are imperative in the formation and development of a relevant and authentic Black British theology. It can be argued that the context of Cone's theologizing (both historically and religiously) is not sufficiently nuanced or easily transportable for the Black British context. However, Cone's treatment of the relationship between theology and the Black experience, as well as the development of Black Christian consciousness and identity through theological reflection, provides a fecund framework.

The publication of James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* in 1969 marked the beginning of the attempt to systematically define the content of concerns of Black Theology. While other theologians have contributed to the discourse[1] on Black Theology, James Cone remains its

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[1] Important contributions during this early period to the debate include R.Williams Jones, Is God a White Racist? Garden City, New York, Doubleday:1973; C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church since Frazier, New York: Schocken Books, 1974; Basil Moore (ed.) The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa, Atlanta: John Knott Press, 1974: Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books:1983; William L. Eichlberger 'A Mytho-Historical Approach to the Black Messiah.' *Journal of Religious Thought*, vol. 33 (Spring-Summer 1976); Zephania Kameeta, Black Theology of Liberation Lutheran World, vol.22, no.4 (1975), pp.276-278; Gayraud S. Wilmore, 'Black Theology: Its Signifiance for Christian Mission Today', *International Review of Missions*, vol.63 (April 1974), pp.211-231; Gayraud S. Wilmore 'Black Messiah: Revisiting the Color Symbolism of Western Christology', *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, vol.2 (Fall 1974), pp.8-18. William R. Jones 'Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology: A Critique of Washington, Cone and Cleage', *Harvard Theological Review*, vol.64 (October 1971), pp.541-557.

chief theological architect. Cone's significance is acknowledged by Wilmore:

> More than anyone else, James Cone set the tone and described the content for Black Theology with the publication of his first book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, in 1969.[2]

Recognizing Cone as the leading exponent of this new way of theologizing Dr. C. Eric Lincoln summarizes Cone's importance and his contribution to the Church, theology and the Black Revolution:

> Every religion presupposes the development of a theology which explains its central meaning and gives it perspective. Professor Cone is the first theologian to give formal and systematic expression to the meaning of Black religion and to place it in the context of the Black Revolution. But Dr. Cone's larger contribution transcends the Black Revolution and offers to America, and to the church, a key to understanding something more about this society and something more about the faith than we have ever undertaken to learn.[3]

The publication of Cone's first book caused a religious and theological explosion in both the black and white Christian communities in America. For a theologian who described himself as a writer with a 'definite attitude', this was not at all surprising. The attitude that permeated Cone's polemics was that of 'an angry black man, disgusted with the oppression of blacks in America and with the scholarly demands to be 'objective about it'. [4]

According to Cone, 'Too many people have died, and too many are on the edge of death'. The Old Testament prophets 'spoke in anger' and

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[2] Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979, New York, Orbis Books:1979, p.77. Hereafter referred to as BTDH.

[3] See Lincoln's Foreword in Cone's A Black Theology of Liberation, Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott Company:1970, p.10.

[4] James H Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, New York, Seabury Press:1970, p.2.

Jesus exhibited this emotion. Espousing 'objectivity' as a philosophical procedure may be appropriate, argued Cone, in debating abstractions, but when human existence and integrity are in question, and lives are at stake, remaining theologically cool and 'dispassionate' often means 'being uninvolved or not taking sides'.[5] In this regard Cone, the apostle of Black Theology, asks a pertinent and provocative question: 'Is it not time for theologians to get upset?'[6]

Cone's methodology and critique signaled a new departure in theological discourse and black religious consciousness and orientation. By identifying the struggle for black freedom, liberation, and dignity with the liberating work of the Holy Spirit, Cone was in fact unmasking the 'principalities and powers' which held black lives captive and defined the aspirations and limitation of black existence. This theologizing recognized, as Moltmann later observed, that while there exist both 'unconscious' and 'naïve' types of theologies 'there is no apolitical theology; neither in earth nor in heaven'.[7]

The Black Theology articulated by Cone presents a serious hermeneutical challenge to our thinking about the function of theology and the church in society, as well as its relationship to political structures and cultural practices. Cone's theology is an attempt to demystify the socio-political and theo-religious relations by asking serious questions about the meaning of black faith and existence in a society where racism distorts and fragments human relations. In the context of America in the

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p.3.

[7] See Jürgen Moltmann, On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics , London, SCM Press:1984, p.99.

1960's, at the height of the Civil Rights movement and a year after the assassination of its preeminent advocate, Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr., these questions took on a new potency and urgency for the black religious community. Racism - the 'American dilemma'- [8] and its effects on blacks material conditions of existence and black religious life, became for Cone a theological issue. Key aspects of Cone's critique of American racism and its contradiction of the Christian faith can be found in George D. Kelsey's classic text. According to Kelsey, the modern phenomenon of racism is a 'faith'; and as such it is 'a form of idolatry' predicated upon 'the peculiar conjunction of modern ideas and values with the political, economic and technological realities of colonialism and slavery'.[9] Interestingly enough, Kelsey also links racism with Christianity and Christian civilisation.[10]

In a real sense, the significance of Cone's announcement for a new theological discourse and black religious consciousness and perspective in *Black Theology and Black Power* may be analogous to Friedrich

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[8] See Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, New York & London, Harper & Brothers Publishers:1944; Milton C. Sernett (ed), African American Religious History: Documentary Witness, Durham and London, Duke University Press:1999; Lester B. Scherer, Slavery and the Churches in Early America, 1619-1819, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company:1975; John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans, New York, Alfred A. Knopf:191947; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience, Durham and London, Duke University Press:1990; Dinesh D'Souza, The End of Racism: Principles of a Multiracial Society, New York, The Free Press:1995. His work has, undoubtedly, shifted the conceptual framework for theorizing American 'race relations' in arguing that Black cultural dysfunctionality and cultural pathologies are partly responsible for the continuing location of African Americans at the lower end of the socio-economic index. In effect, D'Souza has constructed a 'revisionist' paradigm of the liberal consensus on racism in America: whilst acknowledging that racism is still America's 'unsolved dilemma' (p.xiii), he refutes the liberal consensus that racism is the 'primary explanation' for black failure today. See also David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Society, Cornell University Press: 1966; Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity (Chapter 2 'A Genealogy of Modern Racism' pp.47-65), The Westminister Press: 1982; Elijah Muhammad, Message To the Blackman in America, Virginia, United Brothers Communications Systems: 1965: Albert B. Cleage, Jr., Black Christian Nationalism, New York, Morrow Quill Paperbacks: 1972.

[9] Kelsey, Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man, New York, Charles Scribner's & Sons:1965, pp.19-30.

[10] Ibid.

Nietzsche's significance and his announcement of the 'death of God' and its theological, metaphysical and moral implications. If Nietzsche had written nothing else, his parable of the 'madman' and his prophetic message would have guaranteed him a place in the intellectual memory of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Indeed, Nietzsche's parable[11] of the 'madman' would have been a significant clue to an understanding of the cultural-historic death of God. In looking for God in the market place with his lantern lit bright the Madman declares to his audience:

> 'Whither is God?...I shall tell you. We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murderers...whither are we moving? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? ...God is dead...And we have killed him.[12]

Cone's theologizing and his identification of the work of Christ with 'Black Power' and the Black Revolution in America in the 1960s and, by implication, the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere, constitutes a radical departure and epistemological discontinuity in the orientation and discipline of theology. This black theological orientation established a new paradigm for thinking about the black experience, culture, and the Scriptures; the context and content of Cone's theology also brings with it the challenges of adopting a 'liberatory hermeneutical' imperative which serves the black religious communities while remain true to the test and spirit of the Scriptures.

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[11] See Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, New Jersey, Princeton University Press:1974.

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, (translated and introduced by Walter Kaufmann) New York, Vintage Books:1974, pp.181-182.

3.1 The Identification Thesis — Black Power as the Central Message of Christianity?

For black religionists Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* provided a model of a 'theology of revolution'. In the context of a racialised society (predominantly a segregated Christian community), Cone's attempt to put this radical political theology on the theological agenda was destined to generate controversy and further accentuate the racial-religious polarization. The urgency and necessity of examining the relationship between Black Power and Christianity, as Cone later argued, was partly to do with his perception of white theologians' inability to transcend their cultural matrix of consciousness; it was also to do with ways in which Cone perceived how living in racist society consciously or unconsciously blinds white theologians to the plight of oppressed groups. This perception is succinctly summed up by Cone:

> Because white theologians live in a society that is racist, the oppression of black people does not occupy an important item on their theological agenda.[13]

As *Black Theology and Black Power* was unapologetically political, it was a contemporary expression of black Christian radicalism. The content covered a range of themes and religious issues which were

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[13] Cone, God of the Oppressed, Minneapolis, Minnesota, The Seabury Press:1975, p.52. Using the Marxian concept of ideology as the ruling ideas of the ruling class and its relevance to American theologians, Cone concludes: 'Unfortunately, American theology from Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards to Reinhold Niebuhr and Schubert Ogden, including radicals and conservatives, have interpreted the gospel according to the cultural and political interest of white people. They have rarely attempted to transcend the social interest of their group by seeking an analysis of the gospel in the light of the consciousness of black people struggling for liberation. White theologians, because of their identity with the dominant power structure, are largely boxed within their own cultural history.'

informing the 'Black Revolution'[14] in America in the 1960s. The meaning of Black Power, the prospect of reconciliation without violence and revolution, racism and the Gospel in America, black identity, theodicy and black eschatology, were the dominant themes in this book. These themes, along with the functions of ideology in theology were to form the foundation of Cone's theological concerns. Below we shall explore these ideas and evaluate their development in Cone's theology.

In investigating the concept of Black Power, Cone stated that he wanted to place 'primary emphasis on its relationship to Christianity, the Church, and contemporary American theology'. The thesis that Cone goes on to outline, sustain, and defend, remained part of his essential and indispensable hermeneutical construct in respect of 'Black Power' and the Christian faith. Thus Cone argues:

> I know that some religionist would consider Black Power as the work of the Antichrist. Others would suggest that such a concept should be tolerated as an expression of Christian love to the misguided black brother. It is my thesis, however, that Black Power, even in its most radical expression, is not the antithesis of Christianity, nor is it a heretical idea to be tolerated with painful forbearance. It is, rather, Christ's central message to twentieth-century America.[15]

This identification of 'Black Power' with the gospel – 'Christ's central message' – was a departure form the concessions made by King to the Black Power movement.

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[14] See William Brink and Louis Harris, The Negro Revolution in America, New York, Simon and Schuster:1964; Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story, New York, Harper & Row:1958; see also James Forman, 'The Black Manifesto', pp, 80-89, and Nathan Wright, Jr., 'Black Power: A Religious Opportunity', pp. 48-61, in Wilmore and Cone, BTDH.

[15] Black Theology and Black Power,p.1.

King argued that Black Power was a 'legitimate' cry of the voiceless and powerless in American society, and he endorsed what he saw as the broad and positive aspects of Black Power. For King, there was a semantic problem – the denotative and connotative meaning of the term – with the slogan of Black Power:

> ... I pleaded with the group to abandon the Black Power slogan. It was my contention that a leader has to be concerned about the problem of semantics. Each word, I said, has a denotative meaning - its explicit and recognized sense - and a connative meaning-its suggestive sense. While the concept of legitimate Black Power might be denotatively sound, the slogan 'Black Power' carried the wrong connotations. I mentioned the implication of violence that the press had already attached to the phrase.[16]

Cone was well aware of the ideological dangers in the theological frame of reference which identified the Gospel 'with the historico-political movements',[17] but for him the attitude, mood and strivings of Black Power were too important to overlook. The term 'Black Power' was first used by those who (a)[18] were unambiguous about the meaning and definition of the concept and (b) those who championed the cause. According to Carmichael and Hamilton the concept is:

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[16] King, Where Do We Go From Here?, p.573.

[17] See Cone's My Soul Looks Back, p.45.

[18] In the religious and political thoughts of Marcus Garvey we have, essentially, what became expressions of 'Black Power' and 'Black Theology' in the 1960s. Garvey's concern for black people to exercise power in *defining* themselves, their theology, and aspirations through Africentric perspectives are echoed in Cone, Cleage and many of the Harlem Renaissance writers. See Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Dover, Massachusetts, The Majority Press:1976; Leonard E. Barrett, Soul-Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion, Garden City, New York, Anchor Press/Doubleday:1974, pp.129-152; Ernle P. Gordon, 'Garvey and Black Liberation Theology', and Philip Potter, 'The Religious Thought of Marcus Garvey', in Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (ed), Garvey: His Work and Impact, Kingston, United Cooperative Printers:1988; Tony Martin, Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance, Dover, Massachusetts, The Majority Press:1983, also Martin (ed), African Fundamentalism: A Literary and Cultural Anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance, Dover, Massachusetts, The Majority Press:1991; Nathan I Huggins, Harlem Renaissance, New York, Oxford University Press:1971.

one of the most legitimate and healthy developments in American politics and race relations in our time. It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society".[19]

For those two political architects the term also included a redefinition of black identity and empowerment by reference to African 'roots':

> The extent to which black Americans can and do 'trace their roots' to Africa, to that extent will they be able to be more effective on the political scene.[20]

In short, the goal of Black Power can be thus summarized according to Carmichael and Hamilton as that of:

> (1) Black self-determination
>
> (2) Black self-identity
>
> (3) Full participation in the decision-making processes affecting the lives of black people
>
> (4) Recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people.[21]

Cone, like King and others, discerned the humanizing imperative and existential longing for personhood evident in the philosophy of Black Power. Using the existential language of Camus, the philosophical language of Tillich and the political language of Malcolm X and other

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[19] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamiliton, Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America, New York, Vintage Books:1967, p.44; see also Joseph C. Hough Black Power and White Protestants: A Christian Response to the New Negro Pluralism . Hough sees Black Power as a response to the sins of American society and as 'a demand for a new stance toward whites and a new appreciation of being black...a call for self-determination'. (p. viii)

[20] Ibid., p.45.

[21] Ibid., p.47; see also Carmichael's Nov. 19, 1960 speech on "Black Power" in Joanne Grant (ed) Black Protest pp.459-460.

black radicals, Cone makes three important observations about the ethical and political meaning of Black Power.

Firstly, it means complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by *whatever means* black people deem necessary. The methods may include selective buying, boycotting, or even rebellion. Black Power means black freedom, black self-determination, wherein black people no longer view themselves as without human dignity but as human beings with the ability to carve out their own destiny.[22] This also includes retrieving the power of definition. Secondly, the attitudinal and affirmative psychology of Black Power:

> Black power...is an attitude an inward affirmation of the essential worth of blackness. It means that the black man will not be poisoned by the stereotypes that others have of him[23] ... and the humanity of blacks in spite of white racism.[24]

Thirdly, and perhaps the most important element of Cone's discourse on the subject, Black Power is:

> the spirit of Christ himself in the black-white dialogue which makes possible the emancipation of blacks from self-hatred and frees whites from their racism. Through Black power, blacks are becoming men of wrath, and whites are forced to confront them as human beings.[25]

According to Cone, the demands and confrontation which Black Power forced inside and outside of the Church forced individuals to look at each other and their social status anew in 'light of the structures and

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[22] Black Theology and Black Power, p.6.

[23] Ibid., p.8.

[24] Ibid., p.16.

[25] Ibid., p.62.

institutions of their society'.[26] This essentially means critiquing social and institutional structures of inequity and understanding how these have historically deprived particular groups of a share of the economic and political resources, thereby creating conditions that engender rebellion.[27] From the viewpoint of the failure of American institutions to deliver equality to its 'citizens of color', Cone is in agreement with King's critique of the failure of America to honour its 'promissory note'[28] guaranteeing the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Although there is a Rawlsian dimension in (Rawls argued that 'Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems thought.'[29]) Cone's understanding of institutional inequity which needs radical correction, he is much more concerned about the ontological and theological challenge of Black Power and its relationship to the Gospel. This relationship is explored in consequence of the psychological empowerment by the concept of Black Power as blacks became 'men of worth, and whites are forced to confront them as human beings'.[30] The identification of 'Black Power' with the Gospel of Christ is a central theme in Cone's liberation theology. A cursory analysis of this relationship in Cone's early work illustrates the way in which this theo-political identification informs Cone's point of theological departure. The three claims Cone make for Black Power below illustrate the point:

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., pp.135-152; see also A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.34-45; Vincent Harding, 'Black Power and the American Christ', in Wilmore and Cone (ed), BTDH.

[28] See King's 'I Have a Dream speech', 1963, in J.M. Washington (ed), A Testimony of Hope, p.217. 'Instead of honouring this promissory note', says King, 'America has given the Negro people a bad cheque...marked "insufficient funds"'.

[29] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1972, p.3.

(a) Black Power is God's new way of acting in America. It is his way of saying to blacks that they are human beings: he is saying to whites: 'Get used to it.' Whites, as well as some blacks, will find the encounter of Black power a terrible experience. Like the people of Jesus' day, they will find it hard to believe that God would stoop so low as to reveal himself in and through black people and especially the 'undesirable elements'. If he has to make himself known through blacks, why not choose the 'good Negroes'? But, that is just the point: God encounters men at that level of experience, which challenges their beings. The real test of whether whites can communicate with blacks as human beings is not what they reply to Ralph Bunche but how they respond to Rap Brown.[31]

(b) Black power, though not consciously seeking to be Christian, seems to be where men are in trouble. And to the extent that it is genuinely concerned and seeks to meet the needs of the oppressed, it is the work of God's Spirit. By contrast to the self-consciously 'Christian' person so easily uses the poor as means to his own salvation. But unless the conditions of the poor become the condition of the Christian, not because he feels sorry for the poor, but through the Spirit of Christ he is in fact poor, all acts done on behalf of them are nothing in the eyes of God.[32]

(c) Moreover, it seems to me that it is quite obvious who is actually engaged in the task of liberating black people from the power of white racism, even at the expense of their own lives. These are men who stand unafraid of the structures of white racism. These are men who risk their lives for the inner freedom of others. They are men who embody the spirit of Black Power. And if Christ is present today actively risking all for the freedom of man, he must be acting through the most radical elements of Black Power.[33]

By claiming, as Cone does, that Black Power is 'God's new way of acting in America', the work of the Spirit, and Christ 'acting through the most radical elements of Black Power', one may be tempted to argue that Cone, like other liberation theologians, is in danger of reducing Jesus to the purely political dimension. Paul Holmer criticizes Cone on this point

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[30] Black Theology and Black Power p.62.

[31] Ibid., p.61.

[32] Ibid., p.60.

and argues that theo-political paradigms of this sort are 'reprehensible' and susceptible to the charge of making 'religion in itself an ideology':

> One of the features that seems wrong to me about some Black Theology is the ease with which that theology has been fed into the Black revolution and the raising of Black consciousness. However laudable these ends may be, it does seem to me reprehensible, again on intellectual grounds, when the same is done with Christianity and Black Theology. Of course, one may say, easily enough, that has been done before and by emperors, kings, popes and slave owners. All that may be true. But this is no defense against the charge that this is to make a religion in itself an ideology... to see so much of Black Theology almost become a means only of inspiring a Black revolt or social change seems to admit a deep fault.[34]

3.2 Black Methodology and White Theological Challenge to the Black Hermeneutical Circle

Cone's theo-political construct poses a range of methodological and epistemological problems which challenges traditional theology— the so-called 'disinterested' theology of Paul Holmer.[35] Cone's theologizing goes beyond Kantian preoccupation with 'moral and non-moral actions' and locates itself within the broader tasks and functions of theology as articulated by Gutierrez. Here it is recognized that theology is more than 'rational knowledge, but it is also concerned with 'wisdom', spirituality, critical reflection on praxis and the lived-experience of different Christian communities.[36]

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[33] Ibid., p.41.

[34] See his 'About Black Theology', in BTDH, pp.190-191.

[35] Ibid., p.191. Holmer views Black Theology as a 'mistaken bit of epistemology and misplaced rhetoric' (p.190); see also Robert E Hood, Must God Remain Greek? Afro-Cultures and God-Talk, Minneapolis, Fortress Press:1990, pp.1-10.

[36] See Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, London, SCM Press:1974.

For Cone, the epistemological breakthrough which constitutes his theological departure is not informed primarily by *abstract* principles, but rather by the suffering and *lived-experience* of the faith community to which he belongs:

> Theology cannot be indifferent to the importance of blackness by making some kind of existential leap beyond blackness to an undefined universalism. It must take seriously the questions which arise from black existence and not even try to answer white questions, questions coming from the lips of those who know oppressed existence only through abstract reflection. If theology is to be relevant to the human condition which created it, it must relate itself to the questions which arise out of the community responsible for its reason for being. The very existence of Black theology is dependent on its ability to relate itself to the human situation unique to oppressed men generally and black people particularly.[37]

The argument is made more poignant in the preface to his *A Black Theology of Liberation* where he states:

> In a society where men are oppressed because they are black, Christian theology must become Black Theology, a theology that is unreservedly identified with the goals of the oppressed community and seek to interpret the divine character of their struggle for liberation.[38]

Theo Witvliet raises an important methodological and intellectual question concerning the possibility of white theologians understanding and entering into the hermeneutical *'circle'* of Black Theology.[39] Holmer was of the firm opinion that, epistemologically at least, this was possible. According to Holmer, it is an 'intellectual' exercise (as opposed to what one might call an exercise in black psychology/ontology) which

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[37] See Cone's A Black Theology of Liberation, p.76.

[38] Ibid., p.11.

[39] Theo Witvliet, The Way of the Black Messiah: The Hermeneutical Challenge of Black Theology as a Theology of Liberation, London, SCM Press:1987, p.6.

contradicts the view that understanding — analogous with entering what Witvliet terms the 'black circle' — Black Theology can only be understood 'from within'.[40]

Indeed, Holmer sees all notions of black theologians being judge of 'their own thought' and theology (i.e., where the stress on 'the indigenous sources of knowledge of God in Black religions can not be anything but Black and private') to be intellectually untenable and socially debilitating[41]; it is 'a mockery of reasoning' and misplaced rhetoric.[42] Witvliet, like William Jones, answers the question partially by pointing out some of the obstacles to understanding and the danger of annexation of Black Theology by white theologians. Internal criticism and communication between the conversation partners are among the methodologies advocated by Witvliet to enable white theologians to enter and develop competence in 'the circle of black discourse'.[43]

Apart from the process of selecting 'Black Theology' texts with their varied intentions, intellectual dynamics and political options, Witvliet raises a second obstacle that coheres with one of Cone's dominant themes regarding the dialectical relationship between subjectivity and theological reflection:

> The second obstacle is that black theology was born into a world which we do not know and cannot know from the inside: the world of black experience, of racial oppression and the struggle against it. The more we steep ourselves in black history, the more occupied we become with black cultural expressions, the more precisely we seek to unravel the texts of black theologians, the more strongly we feel

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[40] Ibid., p.6.

[41] Paul Holmer, op. cit., p.189.

[42] Ibid., pp.189-190.

[43] Witvliet, op. cit., p.5.

> the gulf which separates us from the black world ... any annexation from our side is not only undesirable but also impossible.[44]

For Cone the issue is simpler, illustrating a Manichean tendency that characterizes aspects of his theologizing:

> Because white theologians are well fed and speak for a people who control the means of production, the problem of hunger is not a theological issue for them...because white theologians are not the sons and daughters of black slaves but the descendants of white slave masters their theologian grid automatically excludes from the field of perception the data of Richard Allen, Henry H. Garnet and Nathaniel Paul, David Walker and Henry M. Turner. [45]

Although Witvliet identifies two obstacles to white theologians moving within the hermeneutical circle of Black Theology, and developing competence and 'adequate description and criticism from within', he points to the real possibility of creative dialogue between 'black' and 'white' theologians by alluding to another danger: the danger of regarding the hermeneutical circle of Black Theology as a closed circle which does not have a single point of contact with that of so-called white theology.[46]

In *Black theology and Black Power* Cone's identification of Christianity with the politics of Black Power was, in essence, a theological justification for the Black Power movement. He believed that the churches needed to make a 'determined effort to recapture the man Jesus through a total identification with the suffering poor as expressed in Black Power'.[47]

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[44] Witvliet, op. cit., p.6; see also William Jones, 'Towards an Interim Assessment of Black Theology', in *Christian Century*, 89,3, May 1972, pp. 513-517.

[45] See God of the Oppressed, p.52; see also Cone's Black Theology and Black Power. Here Cone specifies the 'close identity of American theology with the structures of society'.(p.85)

[46] Op. cit., p.6.

[47] Witvliet, op. cit., p.6.

Using the militancy of Malcolm X,[48] the rage of James Baldwin,[49] the cultural politics of LeRoi Jones,[50] the existential mood and language of Dostoyevsky, Camus, Tillich and others[51], Cone gives the philosophy, policy and practice of Black Power a new form of theological legitimacy, hitherto unobtained for the movement.

This transmogrification of a political ideology had a dual function: it served to reconcile and rally disparate radical and semi-radical groups around a continual project of black equality and empowerment, on the one hand, while it alienated, on the other hand, many white religionist and conservative black groups. By insisting on the inseparability of Black Power and Black religion Cone had, in effect, made Black Theology the 'religion of Black Power.'[52] For Cone, racism[53] and its impact on American society and 'white theology is the new Arian Controversy':

> The issue is clear: Racism is a complete denial of the Incarnation and thus of Christianity. Therefore, the white denominational churches are unchristian. They are a manifestation of both a willingness to tolerate it and a desire to perpetuate it...to be a racist is to fall outside the definition of the Church. In our time the issue of racism is analogous to the Arian Controversy of the fourth century. Athanasius perceived quite clearly that if Arius' views were

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[48] Ibid., pp. 17-18, 40, 48.

[49] Ibid., pp.13, 15, 21.

[50] Ibid., pp.3-4, 131-135.

[51] Ibid., pp 6-7, 54, 84-85. See Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be, Glasgow, Collins:1952. Tillich's notions of the 'courage to be' as the 'ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self affirmation' (p15) and of the 'power of being', where 'power' is the 'possibility a being has to actualize itself against the resistance of other beings' (p.17), are critical to Cone's thinking for they place a chasm between being and non-being and ontologically justify the 'strivings' of Black Power. With this existential awareness Cone saw Black Power as a 'humanizing force because it is the black man's attempt to affirm his being, his attempt to be recognized as "Thou" in spite of the "other".'

[52] Ibid.,p.130.

[53] Ibid., pp.12-23. Cone re-contextualizes the historical and sociological consensus on the so-called 'Negro problem' designation, by stating: 'There is no Negro problem in America; there has never been a Negro problem in America - the problem of race in America is a white problem.' (p.22) In A Black Theology of Liberation, Cone further adds, "the black experience is existence in a system of white racism". (p.55)

tolerated, Christianity would be lost. But few churchmen have questioned whether racism was a similar denial of Jesus Christ.[54]

3.3 Constructing a New Matrix of Black Consciousness – a 'Re-Evaluation of Values'

The contents of Cone's first two books, *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation*, give form and substance to a new political theology whose prime function is the 'liberation' of the oppressed. In Cone's discourse, the oppressed are African-Americans whose historical experience and existential reality are characterized by social discrimination, theological marginalization and ontological negation.[55] Religiously, Cone is arguing for new models, paradigms, values and aesthetics to inform the formation of a new matrix of consciousness, challenging the dominant theo-cultural paradigms which have hitherto defined the boundary of black ontology and dignity.

There is a preoccupation in Cone's first two treatises with 'blackness' and its meaning and experience in religious, political and ontological terms. Within the American context, this preoccupation has been a dominant theme and 'editorial' force in the experience and social institutions of the nation.[56] The concept of 'Blackness' as an ontological

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[54] Ibid., p.73; see also George D. Kelsey, The Christian Understanding of Man, Kelsey argues that 'Christians have failed to recognize racism as an idolatrous faith even though it poses the problem of idolatry among Christians in away that no other tendency does.' (p.19)

[55] See Black Theology and Black Power, (chapters 3, 5); A Black Theology of Liberation , chapter 1-3.

[56] See Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit. In Myrdal, one finds the classic treatise on this phenomenon. This study was the most comprehensive at the time of its publication. It showed the rationalization for a host of popular beliefs about the inferiority and 'superiority' (in respect of "music, the arts, dancing and acting p.108) of the Negro and the function of the convenience of ignorance - 'the escape apparatus' - which invariably classifies the Negro low and the white high (p.41). Winthrop D. Jordan, White over Black - American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812, Penguin: 1968; W.A. Vissert, T. Hooft, The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem, UNESCO: 1954

category has a similar preoccupation in Black British Pentecostal experience and the search for identity. As a key concept, it has featured prominently, along with the associated and explanatory variables of racism and discrimination, in Black American and Diasporian religious lexicography and 'political culture'.[57]

These concepts form, and inform, the psychological and 'attitudinal' reference points within which groups and individuals relate to each other and the wider society. According to Cone, race and the practice of racism in America has distorted and polarised society in ways which are both *unjust* and *unchristian*. Structures of inequality in American society are, according to Cone, maintained by a theology of silence on the part of white theologians whose theological identity is closely related to the social structure:

> The close identity of American theology with the structures of society may also account for the failure to produce theologians comparable to the stature of...Barth and Bonhoeffer...the real reasons are complex. But one cogent explanation is that most American theologians are too closely tied to the American structure to respond creatively to the life situation of the Church in this

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[57] Whilst notions of 'political culture' are necessarily varied in respect of their historical specificity and institutional determinacy, the definition given by Dennis Kavanagh (Political Culture, London/Basingstoke, Macmillan:1972) is a useful basis for an understanding of this concept. Kavanagh says:'For our purpose we may regard the political culture as shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates.'(p.10) The way in which religion and theology entered and informed the political culture of North America, the Caribbean, Britain and South Africa is central to an understanding of the liberation and political theologies of Cone, Gutierrez, Boff, Allan Boesak and others. The importance of 'Race' as a socio-psychological and historical concept is still one of the most salient feature in America's political culture, informing social institutions and the call for moral regeneration. See Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance: an Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity, Philadelphia, The West Minister Press:1982; Race Matters, Boston, Beacon Press: 1993; Mattias Gardell, Countdown to Armageddon: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, London, Hurst& Company:1996). The *'colour-line'* spoken about by W.E.B. DuBois in his The Souls of Black Folk (1903) took on a frank and interrogatory question as the title of Anthony T. Evans' book demonstrates. In his Are Blacks Spiritually Inferior to Whites?-The Dispelling of an American Myth, Wenonah, Renaissance Productions, Inc.:1992, he argues for a theology that is engaged in the 'new demythologizing process' (p.22) of the historic discourse on the inferiority of the African and the way this has informed America's religious and political cultures. See Dinesh D'Souza's The End of Racism, especially chapter 12 "Uncle Tom's Dilemma: Pathologies of Black Culture", pp.477-524.

> society...few American theologians have made that identification with the poor blacks in America but have themselves contributed to the system which enslaved black people.[58]

That the function, meaning and experience of racism and 'blackness' should occupy such a central place in Cone's 'liberation theology is principally due to what constitutes the 'American Dilemma' and the classic DuBoisian peculiar sensation of the 'double-consciousness' metaphor in describing the African sojourn in the Diaspora, especially in America:

> ...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world— a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one black body...[59]

Sixty years after DuBois' articulation of this classic 'double-consciousness' one hears resonance of the same 'strivings' for equality and ontological recognition in both M.L. King and James Baldwin. King had maintained that the ethics of the 'beloved community' should be underpinned by the Christian doctrine of radical and ontological equality where the individual is judged not by the '*color* of their skin but by the content of their *character*'.[60]

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[58] Black Theology, p.85.

[59] W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, New York, Banton (Classic edition) Books:1989 originally published 1903). Introduction by Henry-Louis Gates, Jr.,p.3.

[60] See his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech in James M. Washington (ed.) A Testament of Hope- The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. ; Manas Buthelezi, "The Theological Meaning of True Humanity" in Basil Moore, Black Theology: The South African Voice, London, C. Hurst and Company:1973. Like King, Buthelezi, is also concerned with the meaning of ontological equality which transcends colour; he argues for what he calls a 'post-colonial' humanity where black Christians share with others the God-given 'dominion' over creation.

In characteristic fashion, Baldwin describes to his nephew the melancholy tale of black existence in America and the possibility of redemption and racial harmony through acknowledgment, and 'love' of his lost younger (white) brothers:

> Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.[61]

The ontological and existential experience of the African-American 'other' is infused with an enduring poignancy as Sojourner Truth unmasks the contradictory legacy of the historical privileging of white womanhood as a symbol of universal femininity:

> I have borne thirteen children and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard - and ar'n't I a woman?[62]

Cone discloses this denial of 'somebodiness', self-definition and ontology of Africans in American society as a central issue of Black Theology. To the extent that he wants to create 'a religious system of values based on the experience of the oppressed' [63] Cone shares both the moderate and the militant vision of DuBois and Le Roi Jones respectively for the transformation of society. DuBois argued that the American Negro

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[61] See James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time: My Dungeon Shook. ('Letter To my Nephew on the One-Hundredeth Anniversary of the Emancipation') in Baldwin's The Price of the Ticket: Collected Non -Fictional, 1948-1985, London, Michael Joseph:1985), p.336. The final paragraph of this letter is reminiscent of Martin Luther King's 1963 *Letter From Birmingham Jail* and the theme of his *I Have a Dream Speech* where the rhetoric and reality of black freedom and constitutional equality are brought into sharp contrast, especially 'when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society.' (See King's Why We Can't Wait, p.81.)

[62] Sojourner Truth, Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Bondswomen of Olden Time With a History of Her Labors and Correspondence Drawn from Her 'Book of Life', (originally published in 1850, New York, Oxford University Press:1991, pp.133-134.

[63] Black Theology p.131.

desperately wanted the 'doors of opportunity' opened for him to make his proper contribution to society which have been historically 'wasted':

> This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed and forgotten.[64]

In Cone's work, there is an identification with Jone's critique of the function of the black artist and the need to create a new 'black aesthetic' and escape what LeRoi Jones calls the '*white thing*' in his play *Dutchman*. Jones believes that the function of the black artist is not only to 'reflect so precisely the nature of the society that other men will be moved by the exactness of his reading', but also to 'aid in the destruction of America as he knows it.'[65]

> By describing precisely the experience of black existence in America, and the explanation as to why a transformation in culture and values are needed, Cone insists that the germ for this aesthetic and theological revolution must be endogenous – it must come from within the black experience of the black community.

Although Cone maintains that this new value system must not be identified with Nietzsche – 'the death of God theology' [66]— much of the language of the creation of 'new values' is informed by Nietzsche's philosophical framework on the 'revaluation of all values'.[67] Nietzsche

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[64] DuBois, op. cit., p.3; see also DuBois' "The Negro Mind Reaches Out" in Alain Locke (ed) The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance New York, Atheneum:1920 (reprinted by MacMillan, 1992), pp.385-414.

[65] LeRoi Jones, *Negro Digest*, April 1965, cited in Black Theology, p.3.

[66] Black Theology p.129.

[67] Ibid., p. 127.

defined morality as the 'idiosyncrasy of decadents'[68] and Christianity and Christian morality — 'the most malignant form of the will to lie' [69]— as a 'symptom of weakness, irreconcilable with an ascending, Yes-saying life...'[70]

In his 'revaluation of all values' Nietzsche wants to take humanity beyond 'good and evil' into a realm in which 'truth' and 'good' are defined as that which enhances the individual's 'will to power'.[71] The use of Nietzsche is in no way an attempt to give approbation to the philosopher's conclusions, argues Cone; it merely serves as an 'appropriate example'[72] of the revolutionary thinking which is necessary to give birth to the new system of values Cone advocates. According to Cone, racism in America and the values it created has so defiled the body politic, broken the 'covenant of truth'[73], that it 'must either be revolutionized or eliminated'.[74]

To avoid misunderstanding his theological and political intent, Cone states that he does not 'necessarily' advocates a violent revolution, he is rather speaking about an attitudinal revolution:

> This does not necessarily mean burning of their buildings with Molotov cocktails. What is meant is a removal of the oppressive ideas from the black community which the seminaries perpetuate. We must replace them with black consciousness-

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[68] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, (ed) Walter Kaufmann, New York, The Modern Library 1968, p.789.

[69] Ibid., p.788.

[70] Ibid., p. 784.

[71] See Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra; see also The Will to Power (Book 2 "Critique of Higher Values"), Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, and edited by Kaufmann, New York, Vintage:1968; W. Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist and Antichrist, (chapter 6, "The Discovery of the Will to Power").

[72] Black Theology, p.127.

[73] Ibid., p.26.

[74] Ibid., p.131.

> that is, with Nataniel Paul, Daniel Payne, Nat Turner (not Styron's), Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. Instead of having courses dealing with the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr or Rudolf Bultmann's or Emil Brunner, we need to deal with Henry Garnet and other black revolutionaries.[75]

There is, as Allan Boesak points out, an ambivalence in Cone's writings on the issue of violence. While he maintains that violence is not, necessarily, what is called for, many of the radicals and revolutionaries he cites believed in the *necessary and legitimate* use of violence. Nat Turner, the Baptist preacher countenanced and used it as a divine instrument in the slave insurrection he led in Virginia in 1831[76] ; and Malcolm X always saw it as part of his '*by any means necessary*' strategy. In Black Theology and Black Power, Cone says: 'The Christian does not decide between violence and nonviolence, evil and good. He decides between the less and the greater evil. He must ponder whether revolutionary violence is less or more deplorable than the violence perpetuated by the system. There are no absolute rules which can decide the answer with certainty...But if the system is evil, then revolutionary violence is both justified and necessary.' [77] Paul Lehmann rejects Cone's views on the *justification* and *necessity* of violence, arguing instead for a 'Biblical politics' of 'transfiguration':

> Cone has clearly discerned the necessity of violence; but the necessity of violence is not its justification, as he seems to suggest. The justification of violence is neither a sociological nor an ethical question. It is an apocalyptic question...Ever and again, violence is unavoidable; but violence is never justifiable. Biblical politics, centered upon transfiguration, have no place for a justification of violence. They do,

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[75] Ibid., p.131, also pp. 138-143.

[76] See Gayraud S. Gilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, pp. 53-73; Vincent Harding, There is a River, pp. 75-100.

[77] Black Theology & Black Power, p.143.

however, make room for the inevitability of violence in the course of the revolutionary struggle for humanization.[78]

The search for new values and the constitution of a theological paradigm which does not make 'some kind of existential leap beyond blackness (i.e. privileges the reification of 'abstract reflection') to an undefined universalism'[79]; which emphasizes 'the right of black people to be black and by so doing to participate in the image of God'[80]; which utilizes the God-language to insist on the theological belief that the destiny of black people is inseparable from the religious dimension inherent in the black community— a community that views its liberation as the work of the divine[81]— are all central ingredients in Cone's theology.

It is this general undifferentiated theo-political polemics— the *radical identification* of the philosophy and politics of Black Power with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as agents in the black liberation— which has been both problematic and prophylactic, creating rich and imaginative religious resources and paradigms for doing Black Theology on the one hand while, one the other hand, creating manifold theological and hermeneutical problematics occasioned by the nature of the *theo-political dynamic*. It may be argued that the criticism of Nietzsche as a 'philosopher' can be equally applied to Cone as a theologian. Frederick Copleston maintains that 'Nietzsche lacked the "detachment" necessary for a true philosopher and, therefore, it can not

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[78] Paul Lehmann, The Transfiguration of Politics, London, SCM Press:1975, pp.264-265.

[79] A Black Theology of Liberation, p.76.

[80] Ibid., p.170.

be maintained that he was a metaphysician'.[82] Copleston's argument, along with Mugge's claims that Nietzsche was not a philosopher 'as far as method goes[83]', is partly vindicated on the premise that his imperative assertions[84] were, on the whole, totally unsubstantiated by scientific or rational argument.

In respect of Cone and the provocative scope and conclusions of Black Theology, Theo Witvliet argues:

> The provocative polemical tone of *Black Theology and Black Power* has led some theologians to see black theology as little more than an emotional outburst, perhaps understandable and justified in itself, but dominated too much by the mood of Black Power to be worth taking seriously as theology. But quite apart from misunderstanding the function of the book— namely to open up hitherto enclosed theoretical terrain and make room for black experience and reflection— these critics have also failed to note that James H. Cone is a typically dialectical thinker who, however articulate and 'one-sided' his writing may be, knows that any theological reflection is fragmentary and moves between thesis and antithesis, never being capable of grasping the synthesis, the liberating praxis of Jesus himself. The fact that white theologians— with few exceptions— have so strongly missed the depth of Cone's theology arises from the very subject matter of his book: that the dominant theology is 'white' because, for the most part unconsciously, it reproduces the prevailing power relationships, in which there is no place for black experience and reflection.[85]

Cone maintains that the relationship between theology and social reality, especially the reality of the disenfranchised and marginalized blacks in America, is a critical theological problem which 'American

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[81] Ibid., p.112.

[82] See Frederick Copleston, Friedrich Nietzsche, Philosopher of Culture , Search Press:1975.

[83] M.A. Mugge, Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Work, London, T. Fisher Unwin:1908.

[84] These assertions include the 'death of God' and the doctrine of the 'Eternal Recurrence'.

[85] Theo Witvliet, A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology in the Third World, London, SCM:1985, p.70.

theology' has ignored.[86] The absence of this agenda in American theology, and Cone's radical statement of it in the late 1960s and early 1970s, can be seen as a major contribution to the 'politicization of religion' and what Witvliet refers to as making 'room for black experience and reflection' as a legitimate constituent in theological discourse.

While critics like Edward Norman are concerned about the 'politicization of religion' because they fear that this process transforms Christianity by defining it 'in terms of political values',[87] Cone characteristically argues why politicization of theology is an urgent demand for black people in their quest for freedom and justice:

> Unfortunately, many whites pretend that they do not understand what the black man is demanding. Theologians and churchmen have been of little help in this matter because much of their intellectualizing has gone into analyzing the idea of God's righteousness in a fashion far removed from the daily experiences of men. They fail to give proper emphasis to another equally if not more important concern, namely, the biblical idea of God's righteousness as the divine decision to vindicate the poor, the needy and the helpless in society...A black theologian wants to know what the gospel has to say to a man who is jobless and cannot get work to support his family because the society is unjust. He wants to know what is God's word to the countless black boys and girls who are fatherless and motherless because white society decreed that blacks have no rights.[88]

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[86] Black Theology, pp.82-90; A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.45-49; God the Oppressed, pp. 45-53.

[87] See Edward Norman, Christianity and the Social Order, Oxford, Oxford University Press:1979, p.2. Norman sees the politicization of Christianity as 'a symptom of its decay as an authentic religion', a loss of 'sight of its own rootedness in a spiritual tradition'.

[88] Black Theology and Black Power, p.43.

3.4 Theological Legitimations in Black & White—'Option' for the Oppressed or the Oppressor?

The political functions of Cone's theology are clearly aligned with the politics of Black Power and the 'black revolution' which was taking place in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.[89] Alistair Kee, in his incisive critique of 'liberation' theologies, argues that Cone is essentially 'offering a religious legitimation of the ideology of Black Power' in which 'God's partiality and man's ideological interest' are indistinguishable.[90] The notion of theology functioning to legitimate preferred social arrangements and political preferences is by no means new. Cone argues that theology in both its methodology and its norms,[91] is predicated on social and cultural options and preferences.

In the case of 'white American theology', that option has been in favour of the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and those on the margins of society. Unfortunately, says Cone, American theology has been a:

> '...servant of the state especially in its historic treatment of African and Indian communities. American white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the genocide of Indians and the enslavement of black people. From the very beginning to the present day, American white theological thought has been 'patriotic' either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (the liberal Northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (the conservative Southern approach). In both cases theology becomes a servant of the state, and that can only mean death to black people. It is little wonder that an increasing number of black

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[89] See Cone's, My Soul Looks Back, pp.41-63; For My People, pp.5-30.

[90] See Alistair Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology, p.188; see also Paul L. Lehmann, 'Black Theology and "Christian" Theology', in BTDH, pp. 144-151.

[91] God of the Oppressed, pp. 39-61; A Black theology of Liberation, pp.22-52.

> religionists are finding it difficult to be black and also to be identified with traditional theological thought forms.[92]

The limitations and inevitability of contextuality, and the identification of social and political preferences with theological discourse, have led some to focus too much on these variables in Cone's theology at the expense of missing what is creative and potent in his thinking.[93]

Augustine's *City of God*, along with other classical theological treatises, often illustrate these social, imaginative and seductive interplay between theology and politics, between the political justification of theology an the theological legitimation of particular types of political expressions and institutions.[94] Augustine's quasi-systematic political philosophy arose out of the fall of the Roman Empire. The Roman intellectuals and cultural critics pointed to the adoption of Christianity as the cause of their catastrophe. Augustine's apologetics was not only an attempt, as Sabine argues,

> 'to defend Christianity against the pagan charge that it was responsible for the decline of the Roman power and particularly to having caused the sack of the city by Alaric in 410',

but it was also the theological development of the 'permanent contest of two societies[95]: the kingdom of Evil and the kingdom of Christ which

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[92] A Black Theology of Liberation, pp. 22-23.

[93] See Witvliet, The Way of the Black Messiah, pp.247-265; also his A Place in the Sun, pp.43-85; Jürgen Moltmann, Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology, London, SCM Press:2000, pp.188-216.

[94] In his *City of God*, Augustine says: '...I have taken it upon myself the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of that City...I cannot refrain from speaking about the city of this world, a city which aims at domination, which holds nations in enslavement, but is itself dominated by that very lust of domination.' (See City of God, London, Penguin Books:1972, translated by Henry Bettenson, with an introduction by David Knowles, preface to Bk. I.

[95] See George H. Sabine and Thomas L. Thorson, A History of Political Theory , Dryen Press: 1973, Fourth ed.) p.184. See also David McLellan (ed), Political Christianity: A Reader, London, SPCK:1997; Augustine, The City of God, Bk.ll. (2.)

have influenced Christian thinking on the relationship between state and church, religion and politics.[96]

The dialectical relationship between the 'eternal truth' of the Gospel, and its temporal mediation through culture and history which also can gives rise to theological hegemony ('orthodoxy'), is explicit in Cone's understanding of the functions of theology in general and the challenges of Black Theology in particular.[97] Cone is influenced by both Tillich and H. Richard Niebuhr in this respect:

> The dialectic of theology and its sources pushes us to examine more closely the social context of theological language. Because Christian theology is human speech about God, it is always related to historical situations, and thus all of its assertions are culturally limited...Although God, the subject of theology, is eternal, theology itself is, like those who articulate it, limited by history and time. Although the revelation of God may be universal and eternal theological talk about that revelation is filtered through human experience, which is limited by social realities. [98]

The argument advanced by Norman that theologies which designate itself as 'political', 'liberation' or 'Black' ('systematic explanations of politicized religious values' are symptoms of the decay of Christianity 'as an authentic religion'[99]) fails to acknowledge the 'political' element in, and the political function of, theology. The fear of 'politicization', argues Metz, is often a form of theological 'self-deception' regarding itself as 'being entirely without a political tendency or as politically innocent'.[100]

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[96] Ibid., pp.176-191.

[97] See God of the Oppressed (chapter 3 'The Social Context of Theology') pp.39-61.

[98] Ibid., pp.39-43.

[99] Edward Norman, op. cit., p.13.

[100] Johann Baptist Metz, Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology, London, Burns and Oates: 1980, p.49. Metz goes on to argue that this self-deception in regard to

Cone, like Metz, points out the political dimension of all forms of theologizing[101] and suggests that theology as an intellectual construct mediated through cultural and controlling values (cultural matrix)[102], needs to be critically appraised and contextually analyzed in light of biblical hermeneutics and the traditions of the Church. Because the 'Kingdom of God' impinges upon and permeates the totality of life, theologies are always in danger of masquerading as the 'whole counsel of God', be they presented in the form of a radical 'otherworldly' discourse, or as *radical* Christian politics and social action. The seduction of reductionism is succinctly warned against by Richard Bauckham in respect of Jesus and the meaning of the Gospel:

> To interpret Jesus and his significance in purely political terms would be to reduce Jesus. But we should also be reducing Jesus if we were to exclude the political dimension of his life and fate.[103]

Cone recognized the danger of this reductionist tendency and its implications for Black Theology. The criticism of white theology and its methodology are equally applied to Black Theology, even though Cone points out what he sees as fundamental differences:

> Of course black theologians do not escape the truth of the sociology of knowledge. The difference between Black Theology and white theology does not lie in the absence of a social *a priori* in the former. Like white theologians, black theologians do theology out of the social matrix of their existence. The dissimilarity between Black Theology and white theology lies at the point of each having

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'political' innocence in theology and the praxis of the Church sanctions and validates theological tendencies in politics if they are 'more or less right-wing and conservative in the usual sense of the word'.

[101] See Black Theology and Black Power, pp.31-56, 116-152; A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.17-49; My Soul Looks Back, pp.41-63.

[102] God of the Oppressed, pp.39-107.

[103] Richard Bauckham, The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically, London, SPCK:1989, p.142.

different mental grids which account for their different approaches to the gospel. While I believe that the social *a priori* of Black theology is closer to the axiological perspective of biblical revelation...the point is simply the inescapable interplay between Theology and society – whether white or Black theology. This means that theology is political language. What people think about God, Jesus Christ, and the Church cannot be separated from their own social and political status in a given society.[104]

The biblical injunctions to 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's' (Luke 20:25); and 'Let every soul be subject unto the Higher power. For these is no power but of God, the power that be ordained of God' (Romans 13:1) are invoked to elicit 'blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state'[105] in advancing what the *Kairos* Theologians called 'State Theology'. This, of course, has always functioned as a two-edged sword, serving either to maintain the status quo or seen as the illegitimate use of power and authority inciting rebellion. But writing to the South African Minister of Justice in August 1979, the theologian Allan Boesak demonstrates the limits and relativity of Christian obedience in a morally questionable state, especially where peoples 'basic human rights' are undermined:

> It is my conviction that, for a Christian, obedience to the State or any authority is always linked to the obedience to God. That is to say, that obedience to human institutions is always relative. The human institution can never have the same authority as God, and human laws must always be subordinate to the Word of God. This is how the Christian understands it. Since God does not expect blind obedience from his children, children cannot give unconditional obedience to a worldly sovereignty...nearly all the large Christian churches in South Africa have condemned the policy of your government (Apartheid) as sinful and wrong...The

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[104] God of the oppressed, p.45.

[105] See *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church*, 1985, in Charles Villa-Vicencio, Between Christ & Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp.251-269.

> Scriptures know the familiar disobedience to powers when these powers disregard the Word of the living God.[106]

3.5 Opposition to Pseudo-Cultural and Pseudo Political Symbols and the Search for Black Christian Identity

Liberation theology of the poor and oppressed from the structures, symbols, and regimes of oppression constitute points of departure in the theological discourse of James Cone, Karl Barth and later Daniel Liechty. For Liechty, an oppositional and prophetic stance — a stance of unbelief — needs to be adopted when deified cultro-political symbols of Christ are used as tools of oppression:

> In as much as the deified Christ has simply become one more immortality symbol in whose service people are killed, marginalized and kept in bondage to systems of oppression, we must be willing to let that deified Christ go. We must take a stand of unbelief toward that Christ.[107]

The theo-cultural Christ which forms part of the symbolism of oppression spoken of by Liechty was viewed by Vincent Harding as the 'American Christ' as opposed to the 'universal Christ'. According to Harding, the creation of the American culture-religion that constructed this 'pseudo-Nazarene' in the image of white middle-class America 'shamed us by his pigmentation, so obviously not our own'.[108] Harding's observations, like those of Liechty and Harvey Cox are congruous with Cone's main argument concerning the theo-political and theo-cultural identification of Christianity with the dominant ideology. Cone's critique

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106 Allan Boesak, Letter to the South African Minister of Justice, 24th August, 1979, in Charles Vila-Vicencio, op. cit., pp.236-237.

107 Daniel Liechty, Theology in Post-Liberal Perspective, London, SCM Press:1990, p.54; *The Barmen Declaration, 1934*, Charles Villa-Vicencio, op. cit.

of American theology and the white church[109] is succinctly echoed by Cox:

> ...the horror of our American tragedy is that Christianity has frequently been used as an ideology of suppression against Negroes.[110]

The experience of Cox's 'American tragedy' and its transmogrification/sublimation into what Malcolm X called the 'greatest miracle' achieved by Christianity in America is due largely to the power and creativity of the dominant black institution in America—the Black Church.[111] Malcolm X states:

> The greatest miracle Christianity has achieved in America is that the black man in white Christian hands has not grown violent. It *is* a miracle that 22 million black people have not *risen up* against their oppressors — in which they would have been justified by all moral criteria, and even by the democratic tradition! It is a miracle that a nation of black people has so fervently continued to believe in a turn- the-other cheek and heaven - for - you - after - you - die philosophy! It *is a miracle* that the American black people have remained a peaceful people; while catching all the centuries of hell that they have caught, here in the white man's heaven.[112]

Cone's identification of Black Power with the liberation work of the Holy Spirit in twentieth century America; his critique of white American theology and the church's closed historical relationship with the forces of black oppression and social disenfranchisement; his expose' of the use of the gospel as an ideological tool masking the dialectical

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[108] Vincent Harding, 'Black Power and the American Christ'.

[109] See Black Theology and Black Power, chapter 3; A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.86-90, 152-159; God of the Oppressed, pp.45-53.

[110] Harvey Cox, On Not Leaving it to the Snake , London, SCM Press:1968, p 173.

[111] In Eric Lincoln's classic statement the role of Black Church is summarized as 'the peculiar sustaining force', and as *sanctum sanctorum*. See his 'Foreword' in Cone's, A Black Theology of Liberation, p.8.

[112] See The Autobiography of Malcolm X , Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books:1965, p.349.

relationship between the cultural and political interest 'of the dominant power structure' and the 'identity' of white theologians,[113] call into question the traditional methodology of theology as well as the use, function and hierarchy of 'norms' and 'sources' in theological discourse.

Black identity is treated by Cone in the same way black power and black politics are treated: he sees them as theological issues, intricately related to the history and experience of black people in America. The 'norms and 'sources' of theology— the very enterprise of theologizing itself— are contextualized and problematised in the light of Cone's perennial theme: that Christian theology is a theology of liberation[114] and that God, being the God of the oppressed, is concerned with 'social, economic and political justice for those who are poor and unwanted in society'.[115] In the context of North America, says Cone, the 'unwanted' and socially marginalized are black.

For black religionists, especially Christians, Cone's theological imperatives and paradigms point to imaginative and challenging ways of positioning and recontextualizing the meaning of 'norms' and 'sources' of theology. In Foucaultian terms, Cone's insistence on black experience and reflection as a 'source' of theology is a theological insurrection of '*subjugated knowledge*',[116] contesting and reconstructing theological 'regimes of truth' for doing theology against the 'liberal northern

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[113] See God of the Oppressed, p.47; A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.46-47. Cone says: 'White theologians, not having felt the sting of oppression, will find it most difficult to criticize this nation, for the condemnation of America means a condemnation of self.' (p. 49)

[114] A Black Theology of Liberation, p17.

[115] Ibid., p. 19.

[116] See bell hooks and Cornel West, Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life, Boston, Ma, South End Press:1991, pp.142-146.

approach' (i.e., one which defines the theological task independently of Black suffering) and the 'conservative southern approach' (i.e., one which defines Christianity as compatible with white racism).[117] It is Cone's explicit identification of the 'central message of Christ' with the philosophy and politics of Black power and God's siding with the poor – this 'preferential option for the poor' which Boff and Elizondo argue constitutes 'nothing short of a Copernican revolution for the Church',[118] pointing to the potential for the creative development of black theologies, as well as its limitations.

The creative potential lies in the necessity for diverse Christian communities to deconstruct and reconfigure their Christian identities in culturally authentic ways; the limitations lie in the historical and social contexts (moments of arising) of this form of Christian authentication and of changing historical and experiential reality transforming the language, and modalities, which gave rise to functional and existential meaning to the initial impetus to this theology. In Christological terms, it makes problematic the task of constructing Christian cultural and spiritual identity in plural and post-colonial societies a perennial struggle and self-authenticating exercise for communities which have been on the receiving end of oppression. It also brings into sharp focus the historical *Christ-Culture* debate[119], Tillich's classic understanding of

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[117] A Black Theology of Liberation , pp.22-23.

[118] Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, op. cit., p. ix; see also Itumeleng J. Masala, 'The use of the Bible in Black Theology', in Cone and Wilmore, Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume 2, 1980-1992, New York, Maryknoll, Orbis Books:1993, pp.245-254.

[119] See Richard H. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, New York, Harper & Row:1951. In chapter lX ('*Denominationalism and the Colour-Line*'), Niebuhr argues that racial division in the church was not theologically determined, but rather socially determined: 'The causes of the racial schism are not difficult to determine. Neither theology nor polity furnished the occasion for it. The sole source of this denominationalism is social.' Cone sees Niebuhr's view as defective in so

the 'constructive task'[120] of systematic theology in stating the 'eternal truth' of the Christian message and 'the interpretation of this truth for every new generation',[121] and Cone's view of the eclipsing and silencing of cultural and historical story-telling from the other side of history as both a denial of the ontology of the 'Other'[122] and the 'usurpation of God's rule'. Cone contextually relates the eclipse of the African and Indian *stories* on the continent of North America as a metaphor for their decimation and subjugation respectively:

> When people can no longer listen to other people's stories, they become enclosed within their own social context, treating the distorted visions of reality as the whole truth. And then they feel that they must destroy other stories, which bear witness that life can be lived in another way. White people's decimation of red people and enslavement of black people in North America is an example of an attempt to deprive people of their stories...From the biblical view it is an epic of rebellion, the usurpation of God's rule. In other words it is ideology.[123]

The search for black Christian identity that is rooted in the 'eternal truth' of the Gospel and finds resonance in the black experience and reflection is, according to Cone, a necessary departure in defining and resolving the black identity crisis for Christians.[124] It also alters one's

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far as it assumes the 'theology of the socially racist was adequate and that depraved social views did not affect theological doctrine.' In short, Cone argues that Niebuhr 'fails to recognize the dialectic relation between social reality and theological reflection'. (God of the Oppressed, pp.255-256.)

[120] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Digswell Place, Herts, James Nisbet and Co. Ltd: 1953), Vol 1 p.59.

[121] Ibid., p3.

[122] See Edward Said's classic study of representation of the 'other' in his Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient, London, Penguin Books:1991 (originally published in 1978 by Routledge & Kegan Paul). 'Modern thought and experience ', says Said, 'have taught us to be sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in the sociopolitical role of intellectuals, in the great value of skeptical critical consciousness.' (p.327)

[123] James Cone, God of the Oppressed, p.103.

[124] See A Black Theology of Liberation pp. 36-40; Hans Küng, Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View, London, HarperCollins:1991, pp.108-119. Here Küng speaks of the 'two

view and hierarchical validation of what constitutes 'legitimate' norms and sources of theology.

The function of 'culture' in the broad sense of the term in the formation and authentication of black identity plays an important role in Cone's sources of theology. Ultimately it recognizes the contextual and historically determined basis of theological reflection,[125] the hegemonic nature[126] of certain types of theological constructs and the need to critique historical and prevailing theological paradigms in the search for contextually and culturally relevant theological perspectives and visions.[127]

3.6 Epistemology and Integrity—Black Experience and the use of 'White' sources for doing 'Black' Theology

The 'norms' and 'sources' of Cone's Black theology are intricately related to his definition and understanding of the function of theology. Indeed, in Cone's theological scheme there is (as an inner logic) a dialectical relationship between the whole and the inner detail, neither of which can be understood without reference to each other. Black theology is related to black history, identity and experience, precisely because these variables constitute '*sources*' for doing theology[128] from a 'liberation'

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sources' (poles or horizons) of theology as being God's revelation in the history of Israel and Jesus and human experience.

[125] In regard to Black theological reflection, see the Benjamin E. May's insightful treatment in his The Negro's God as Reflected in his Literature, New York, Atheneum:1938.

[126] God of the Oppressed, pp.47-49, 84-107.

[127] This satisfies Tillich's 'two basic needs' of a theological system: 'the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation'. See his Systematic Theology, Vol.2. p.3.

[128] A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.53-81.

norm; and Christ *is* black by virtue of his identification with the oppressed through a 'pneumatological confession'.[129] However, Cone's use of 'white' sources for doing 'Black Theology' raises fundamental questions about the intellectual integrity of 'Black Theology' in his early writings.

An analysis of the sources used in *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation* reveal that over sixty percent of Cone's sources and intellectual constructs are taken from 'white' academics, theologians and philosophers.[130] The most popular ones being Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Tillich, Camus, Sartre, Barth and Bonhoeffer. Cone acknowledges this criticism and relates it to the absurdity of black existence. The language of existentialism— i.e., the feeling of the 'absurd', 'despair', forlornness and 'anguish'[131]— is an important intellectual source and orientation in Cone's theology.

For Cone, growing up in America 'is an absurd experience for black people'.[132] Quoting Mueller and Jacobsen, Cone sees the absurd as:

> ...basically that which man recognizes as the disparity between what he hopes for and seems in fact to be. He yearns for some measure of happiness in an orderly, a rational and a reasonably predictable world; when he finds misery in a disorderly, an irrational and unpredictable world, he is oppressed by the absurdity of the disparity between the universe as he wishes it to be and as he sees it.[133]

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[129] Theo Witvliet, The Way of the Black Messiah, p.223; God of the Oppressed pp.133-137; A Black Theology of Liberation pp.212-219.

[130] See Theo Witvliet, The Way of the Black Messiah, p.176.

[131] See Black Theology and Black Power, pp.7-12.

[132] A Black Theology of Liberation. p.178.

[133] Quoted in Black Theology and Black Power, p.9 from W.R. Mueller and J. Jacobsen, 'Samuel Beckett's Long Last Saturday: To Wait or Not to Wait' in Nathan Scott, Jr; Man in Modern Theatre, Richmond, VA, John Knox Press: 1965, p.77 .

While Cone utilizes aspects of the language and mood of the existentialists to underpin his theology, he does not endorse their nihilism or their atheism.

Camus' philosophy, like that of Nietzsche, 'revolves around the problem of rebellion'[134] and its moral and political consequences in the light of the 'death of God'. Care needs to be taken in distinguishing and understanding Cone's 'rebel' from that of Camus', and the extent to which 'Black Power is analogous to Albert Camus' understanding of the rebel'.[135] Camus' 'rebel' is engaged in a 'metaphysical rebellion'[136] against God who he 'finally aspires to replace';[137] Cone's 'rebel' is rebelling against dehumanization, ontological negation, black 'non-being' and a theo-political culture which denies the 'essential worth of blackness'.[138] The main impetus for the black rebellion – the dominant 'norm' – is the liberatory activity of God as disclosed in Christ. For Cone, the Exodus-event and the Incarnation are antidotes against Black nihilism in the face of 'the absurd', as well as a source of hope in a world of contradiction.

In this respect, Cone's rebel receives succour from the Gospel, Tillich, Fanon and Moltmann. From Tillich, he learns the 'courage to be' which is defined as an 'ethical' as well as an 'ontological' act:

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[134] See Albert Camus, The Rebel, Middlesex, Penguin:1971, p.59; Martin Buber, Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy, New York, Harper & Row: 1952; Walter Kaufmann, From Shakespeare to Existentialism, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press:1980 (originally published by Beacon Press in 1959)

[135] Black Theology and Black Power, p.6

[136] Camus op. cit., pp.29-31.

[137] Ibid., p.65.

> The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation.[139]

In saying 'Yes' to 'black humanness' and 'shouldering the burden of liberty in Christ',[140] Black Power exhibits this 'courage to be' which shows that 'the self-affirmation of being is an affirmation that overcomes negation' and non-being.[141] Cone makes interesting and creative use of the Martinique psychiatrist, Franz Fanon, and his 'psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem'. Fanon, taking his cue from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind,* and the assertion of the existence of 'self-consciousness' through the acknowledged reciprocity of the 'self' and the 'other', argues:

> Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his action. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend...At the foundation of Hegelian dialectic there is an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasized. It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately I deprive him even of this being for itself.[142]

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[138] Black Theology and Black Power, p.8; A Black Theology of Liberation, p.178.

[139] See Tillich's The Courage to Be, p.15; Black Theology and Black Power, p.7.

[140] Black Theology and Black Power, p.43.

[141] Tillich, The Courage to Be, p.173.

[142] See Black Theology and Black Power, p.8; F. Fanon, Black Skin, White Mask, (Chapter 7 'The Negro and Recognition) pp.216-217. This recognition of the 'self' through the mediation of the 'other' is philosophically akin to both Martin Luther King and the Jewish philosophy, Martin Buber. King recognized that oppression was injurious to both the humanity of the oppressed and the oppressor; Martin Buber's classic I and Thou opens with the ontological recognition of the 'absolute reciprocity' of being in the following terms: In the beginning was the relation.'

Notwithstanding aspects of Cone's apparent militancy[143], he recognized the moral force of Fanon's discourse on the 'self' and the 'other' and the desirability of keeping the ontological 'circle' open 'through mediation and recognition'[144] (i.e. reciprocal mediation of 'self' through the recognition of the 'other'). In Cone's liberation theology this means that there is salvation *even* for the 'oppressor':

> After all, are we not <u>all</u> oppressed, especially those who think that their freedom is found is social, political and economic domination of others?[145]

The recognition that liberation is for oppressors 'because it is for all people', ultimately, 'prevents hate and revenge from destroying the revolutionary struggle', was seen by Cone as one of the essential truths of Franz Fanon's insights on freedom.[146]

In advocating that the oppressed bearing the burden and 'witness to humanity's liberation by freeing the present from the past and for the future'[147], Cone's liberation theology has much in common with Moltmann's theology of 'hope'; there is also an affinity with Lehmann's '*messianic politics*'—the 'eschatological radicalism that emerged for Jesus from his single-minded obedience to the kingdom of God and to his role in its inauguration'.[148] Cone says:

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[143] <u>Black Theology and Black Power</u>, pp.5-30, 136-143. ; God of the Oppressed, pp. 226-246. There is a sense in which Cone castigates white 'professional theologians', arguing that their 'class consciousness' and relation to the 'advantaged class' makes their theologizing a 'bourgeois exercise in intellectual masturbation'. (<u>God of the Oppressed</u>, p.47.)

[144] Fanon, op. cit., p.217.

[145] <u>God of the Oppressed</u>, p.148.

[146] Ibid., p.151.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Paul Lehmann, <u>The Transfiguration of Politics</u>, pp.91-92. Lehmann argues that in pericope of the Transfiguration (Mat.17:1-8) there is a 'paradigmatic political thrust' which later leads him

> Those who see God's coming liberation breaking into the present must live as if the future is already present in their minds. This means fighting for the inauguration of liberation in our social existence, creating new levels of human relationship in society. The struggle for liberation is the service the people of God render for all, even those who are responsible for the structure of slavery.[149]

According to Moltmann, those who hope in Christ challenge and contradict reality:

> Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under, and contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goal of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present...That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope...This hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself in a 'continuing city'. It makes the Church the source of continual new impulses towards the realization of righteousness, freedom and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come.[150]

In Cone's theology, God sides with the oppressed, but he is not indifferent, paradoxically, to the liberation of the 'oppressor'. Cone recognizes this notwithstanding his theological/ideological concern for, and commitment to, the oppressed. For a theologian who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Karl Barth's anthropology, this theological bias or so-called option for 'the poor' is not at all surprising. Barth had made this 'option' and identification with the poor and oppressed an important theological departure in his *Church Dogmatics*:

> For this reason the ... righteousness required by God and established in obedience— the righteousness which according to Amos 5:24 should pour down as a mighty stream— has necessarily the character of a vindication of right in favour of the threatened

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to resist the Zealotist temptation and '*political messianism*' to seize power 'by force in order to establish a new order, thereby confusing 'God's initiative with man's'. (pp.88-91)

[149] Ibid., pp.150-151.

[150] See A Theology of Hope, pp.21-22.

> innocent, the oppressed, poor, widows, orphans and aliens. For this reason, in the relations and events in the life of His people, God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied and deprived of it.[151]

The historic plight and experience of the African in the modern era— whether in North America, Europe, South Africa or the Caribbean— has been Cone's theological *source/raw* material; and their theological, spiritual and socio-political liberation has been the point of departure in his theological methodology and accountability. Cone's Black theology, with 'liberation' of the oppressed as its dominant function, keeps in tension, and consequently alive in both memory and theological consciousness, the dialectical and existential relationship between biblical revelation[152] and social existence; between religion and politics, between theology and ideology.

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[151] Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. II/1, Edinburgh, T & T Clark:1955, pp. 386.

[152] See H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, New York, Macmillan: 1941. According to Niebuhr, the importance of biblical revelation is not that it is 'intelligible in itself', but rather that it 'illuminates other events and enables us to understand'. (p.109). The same is true of ways in which Cone interprets the black experience in light of biblical revelation.

3.7 Contra Nihilism: Cone as the Modern 'Apostle' of Black Christian Liberation?

As the apostle[153] of 'Black Theology', Cone's early writings, and later developments, have opened the theological door to new dimensions and epistemology in Christian understanding in general and in the theological character of the Black Experience in particular. It could be argued that Cone's theological imagination has played a significant role in rescuing black consciousness and black Christian radicalism from nihilism. Cone has shown that God is concerned with the Black experience; that the Incarnation and the Resurrection are theologically and ultimately black concerns; that the 'pain of the oppressed is God's pain[154]; that eschatologically the resurrection ignites joy and excitement 'in the black community' as a sign of God's victory and the freedom to struggle politically against the imposed injustice of rulers.[155]

Cone's early works imaginatively demonstrated some of the functions of religious and theological discourse. In the case of people of African descent, theology was often used as a legitimating instrument in their oppression, exploitation and dehumanization, starting from the era of modern slavery. Cone's theological legacy and challenge as stated in 1969 with the publication of his *Black Theology and Black Power*,

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153 Albert B. Cleage, author of The Black Messiah, a year before Cone's Black Theology & Black Power, refers to Cone as 'our apostle to the Gentiles': 'He drags white Christians as far as they are ale to go...in interpreting Black theology within the established framework which they can accept and understand.' See his Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church, New York, Morrow Quill Paperbacks:1972, p.xvii.

154 God of the Oppressed, p.175.

155 Ibid.

and reiterated in his 1996 London lecture, remains his identification of the Gospel with the liberation of the poor and the oppressed:

> Therefore any theology that fails to make God's liberation of the oppressed from political bondage its starting point of departure for an exposition of the gospel is *ipso facto* not Christian...that ideological thinking, or what the Bible calls false prophecy, is thought that ignores the liberation of the poor as the decisive ingredient of the gospel.[156]

Thirty years after the formulation of 'Black Theology', the centrality of a critique of racism is still central to Cone's theological project. Indeed, in the spirit of DuBois at the turn of the last century, Cone argues: 'The challenge of Black Theology in the twenty-first century is to develop an enduring race critique that is so comprehensively woven into Christian understanding that no one will be able to forget the horrible crimes of white supremacy.'[157]

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[156] God of the Oppressed, p.255.

[157] James Cone, Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998, Boston, Beacon Press:1999, p.137.

PART THREE

Chapter Four - Racism & Reconciliation In Pentecostal Discourse

4.0 Pentecostal Racial Discourse

Pneumatology occupies a central, and respectable, place in Pentecostal historiography and theological discourse. The politics and place of race, however, in Pentecostal polity and social relations are subjugated to a subliminal and *subtextual* place. There is always the potential for extremes of this subjugated Pentecostal racial contradictions exploding into an unhealthy and un-biblical ecclesiology. Although early Pentecostalism was characterised by a degree of multicultural and interracial fellowship, this Seymourian paradigm gave way to organisational development along racial lines. The racialisation of organisational development set the scene for *the politics of race* and its cultural assumptions becoming the norm in Pentecostal polity and practice. Power relations, as represented in the personnel, status and positioning of key stakeholders in the Church of God, are informed and influenced by racialised practice.

This chapter attempts to do two things. Firstly, to contextualise the first Pentecostal racial reconciliation conference in Memphis by reference to New Testament narratives, suggesting clues and paradigms for engagement and resolution of socio-cultural and theological issues. Secondly, to explore the Memphis (1994) framework for Pentecostal racial reconciliation and its influence on the Church of God Black Ministers Conference (*Unity of the Spirit*) in relations to the church's commitment to internationalisation.

Issues around organisational development, cultural hegemony, representation and the nature of 'internationalisation', pose a fundamental challenge to what can be termed the politics of Pentecostal ecclesiology. The racial problematic of early Pentecostalism, and the organisational accommodation to the exigencies of the prevailing '*politics of moral orders*' (to use a concept developed by Austin-Broos[1],) at the opening decades of the twentieth century in America, and its perpetuation and impact on the New Testament Church of God both in the US and the UK, is a perennial concern of many Pentecostals. In the UK, the racialised paradigm and practice, with its cultural concomitant, has been a point of much private and public discomfort. According to one leading Pentecostal, the politics of the 'Church of God ecclesiology is a source of much pain... even acute embarrassment'.[2]

It would be convenient to argue that there is a 'conspiracy of silence' amongst Pentecostals not to wrestle with this historical problem for fear that it will fracture the 'unity among the brethren'. However, what one finds is not so much a 'conspiracy of silence', or an attempt to 'pass over in silence' the politics of race and racism in Church of God polity and ecclesiology, but rather an *unwillingness* to face the organisational changes needed in structures and processes necessary to *reflect* and *represent* an international and multi-racial Church of God. Although there is 'reluctance and resistance'

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[1] See Jane Austin Broos, Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders, Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press: 1997. The 'politics of moral orders' are characterised by an inherent contradiction between the rhetoric and reality. See also Philip D. Curtin, Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865, New York, Atheneum:1970 (originally published in 1955 by Harvard University Press).

[2] Interview with Revd Joel Edwards, 23.10.02. Historically, the Coloured Section of the Church of God and, politically and culturally, the office of European Supervisor are important factors in the politics of race relations for Church of God Black ministers.

in many churches to deal with race, politics, and cultural differences as they arise in ecclesiastical *sitz im leben*, the New Testament narratives are not at all silent on these matters. A great deal of cultural and political inferences can be drawn for the narratives in constructing models for exploration.

In the early church, as we shall see below, there is an embryonic methodology, a nascent paradigm for problem-solving . There is a history of *resistance*, covert rather than overt, to racism which is not always reflected in the politics of Pentecostal polity and ecclesiology. Among the younger generation of black Pentecostal leaders, issues of race and gender representation, inclusion, cultural hegemony, and political paradigms for the resolution of controversial issues, will define the integrity and relevance of the Church of God to both informed 'insiders' and 'disinterested' outsiders.

4.1 New Testament Paradigm for Dealing with the Politics of Cultural Hegemony?

From the Lucan narrative, and the Pauline epistle to the Galatians, we witness the early church encountering a host of social and cultural problems for which there were no prescribed resolution formulae. Problems of dealing with issues of multiculturalism, pluralism, religio-cultural hegemony, and ethnocentricism, are all nascent and suggested in the texts. Of critical significance is the immediate context of the establishment of the Diaconate[3] (*diakonos*) in Acts chapter 6; and the confrontation between St Paul and St Peter in Antioch.

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[3] See F.L. Cross (ed) The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, London, Oxford University Press: 1957.

There is, in a quasi-Popperian[4] sense, a degree of conjecture and refutation as a methodological paradigm in dealing with complex social and interpersonal problems. The two New Testament texts suggest a way of engaging with controversial issues, offering models for pastoral and political engagement. The salient feature in both texts is the willingness, and *courage*, to confront the perceived and articulated problem. Luke contextualised the establishment of the office of Deacon[5] thus:

1. Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily administration.
2. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.
3. 'Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;
4. 'but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'
5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,
whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

The confrontation in Antioch between Paul and Peter is retold in the former's letter to the *Galatians 2:11-14*:

11. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed,
12. for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.
13. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.
14. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in

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4 See Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul:1963.
5 See F.L. Cross (ed), op. cit., pp. 376-377.

> the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'

There is a 'tendency among the brethren to avoid dealing with difficult issues; in political matters there is a real fear of confrontation...it's so much easier to *pray* about it and let the Lord sort it out.'[6] However, the two biblical passages referred to above suggests that conflict and confrontation in church politics and ecclesiastical affairs have a degree of social and interpersonal normalcy about them.[7] The reality of cultural struggles in the apostolic Church community is summarised by Dunn:

> Diversity, in language and culture, and presumably in social composition too, was part of the first church more or less from the start. There was never a time when the church did not know the tensions which come from diversity of culture and viewpoint and defects in organization![8]

Conflicts often present opportunities for personal and collective learning, as well as organisational growth and development. (' And the saying pleased the whole multitude...Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem...' Acts 6:5,7)

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[6] Floyd Millen, MENTCG Interview: January 16, 2002.

[7] The paradigm is predicated upon the normality of social and cultural conflict, even among believers. The book of Acts is not an attempt to 'whitewash' the early Church; they were not, argues Wright, a 'pure community'. Luke's description of this early Church community portrays a considerable amount of 'residual untidiness': there are racial, theological, personal, cultural, class, and linguistic divisions. See N. T. Wright, The New Testament and the People of God, London, SPCK:1992, pp.452-464; James Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, pp.265-268; John H. Elliott, 'The Jesus Movement was not an Egalitarian but Family-Oriented', *Journal of Biblical Interpretation*, 11, 2:2002, pp.173-210.

[8] James Dunn, The Acts of the Apostles, Peterborough, Epworth Press:1996, p.84. Elliott's main argument is that while the statement: 'Your are one in Christ' (Gal. 3:28) affirms ethnic and social inclusiveness and *unity* in Christ, it 'says nothing about *equality* of those included'. (p.180). In short, unity and equality in Christ are radically different propositions.

At the critical juncture of the primitive church's first conclave in Jerusalem (Acts 15) a judicious framework was constructed for the integration and salvific status of the Gentiles vis-à-vis the Mosaic law. Judaizers had reduced the new found Gospel of Christ to the Abrahamic rite of circumcision and the 'Pharisaic ideology' of purity.[9] A similar schismatic tendency, according to Paul's account above, appeared to have captivated Peter. The two narratives normatise and humanise both the possibility and the inevitably of conflict among 'the saints'—even those who are 'full of the Holy Ghost and power'— suggesting hope for conflict resolution among 'believers' and providing a social framework and theological resources for reflection and problem-solving.

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[9] See Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100, London, Adam & Charles Black:1969, p. 157 (especially chapter V 'Palestine at the Time of Jesus and the Apostles' pp.109-224);William Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites—The Fundamental Institutions, London, A . & C. Black Ltd.: 1927. These Pharisees were not the traditional antagonists of the new religion (many of whom 'sat at the feet of Gamaliel'), rather these were the Judaizers who, as noted by Conybeare and Howson, had not surrendered their 'Jewish bigotry'. Conybeare and Howson summarize the context and significance of the religious and cultural debate enjoined in the discourse in Acts 15: 'The great debates at Jerusalem are no longer between Jews and Christians in the Hellenistic synagogues, but between the Judaizing and the spiritual parties of the Christians themselves. Many of the Pharisees, after the example of St. Paul, had believed that Jesus was Christ, but they had not followed the example of their school-companion in the surrender of Jewish bigotry. The battle, therefore, which had once been fought without was now to be renewed within, the Church. It seems that, at the very fist reception of Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem, some of these Pharisaic Christians "rose up", and insisted that the observance of Judaism was necessary to salvation. They said that it was absolutely "needful to circumcise" the new converts, and to "command then to keep the Law of Moses". The whole course of St. Paul's procedure among the Gentiles was here openly attacked. Barnabas was involved in the same suspicion and reproach; and with regard to Titus, who was with them as the representative of the Gentile Church, it was asserted that, without circumcision, he could not hope to be partaker of the blessings of the Gospel.' W. J. Conybeare & J.S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Grand Rapids, Michigan, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company:1989, p.169.

The dispute between the Hellenists and Hebrews, according to Baird, 'ostensibly concerns the administration of the dole'[10] and the inherited Jewish social welfare practice.[11] The two factions in this dispute would have shared in the assumptions and norms associated with Jewish welfare philosophy and policy. As an integral part of the social theory of talmudic Judaism, this form of public welfare was, according to B.Z. Bokser and B.M Bokser, institutionalised to prevent a number of undesirable social consequences:

> The poor had a claim on the community for support in accordance with their accustomed standard of living. The more affluent members of the community were to share their possessions with the poor, just as members of a family were obligated to share with their kin. The administration of poor relief eventually was institutionalised to place it on a more efficient and respectable basis. Begging from door to door was discouraged. Indigent townsmen were given a weekly allowance for food and clothing. Transients received daily allowances. Food was stored in synagogues and other public places to help meet their immediate needs.[12]

There are different ways of interpreting the appointment of the Seven in the Lucan narrative. On the one hand, it can be treated as the inevitable consequences of the transition from the 'charismatic' to 'bureaucratic' stage of an organisation.[13] On the other hand, it can be viewed as an embryonic form of early Christian *politicisation*. Indeed, in the appointment of the Seven there are, it could be argued, subtle and noticeable levels of

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[10] William Baird, 'The Acts of the Apostles' in Charles M. Laymon (ed), The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, Nashville & New York, Abingdon Press: 1971, p736
[11] William Baird, op. cit.
[12] See Bokser and Bokser's introduction in Ben Zion (translator), The Talmud: Selected Writings, New York, Paulist Press: 1989, p.34.
[13] See H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul:1948, chapter Vlll, pp. 196-262.

dissatisfaction and veiled criticism around cultural hegemony and apostolic leadership, crystallising around the welfare policy of the 'daily administration'.

The appointment of the Seven, therefore, can be seen as a pragmatic response to both people management (unresponsiveness to the needs of cultural diversity) and organisational management (inability to apply bureaucratic measures to accommodate expansion and rapid growth[14]). The extent to which the apostles were goaded, prematurely, by the more 'radical' wing (the Greek-speaking wing of the church who had brought the original complaint) in the early church is open to conjecture. However, as Marshall[15] argues, 'the complaint about poor relief was but a symptom of a deeper problem' of culturio-linguistic cleavage and its impact on the daily distribution. Welfare policy in respect of the neglect of the Hellenist widows became the occasion for airing criticisms, suggesting an ecclesiastical paradigm for problem-solving. There is the suggestion that criticism/confrontation can engender growth, learning and development.

The early Church encountered a host of controversial issues, externally and internally. In dealing with issues of race relations and socio-

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[14] The church was in a transition stage: it was moving from a 'cottage' industry to a corporation; from an oligarchy to a mass movement, and this transition needed different skills and abilities than those possessed by the apostles. The primacy of the apostolic office was to be witnesses to the life and resurrection of Christ, not to 'serve tables'. However, in Acts we see a radical departure from the original calling: 'Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of land or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles feet; *and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*' (Acts 4:34-35). Pentecostals, like Pastor Davey Johnson of Mile End New Testament Church of God, would argue that here we see the apostles 'operating outside of their giftings'.

[15] I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, An Introduction and Commentary, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press:1980, p.125.

political conflict, a number of important lessons can be learnt from the experience of the early Church without recourse to a hyper-spiritual approach.[16] Often this can amount to non-engagement with real issues, the ideology of withdrawal, substituting *political* discourse of the problem for *pietistic* ones.

4.2 Reproducing the 'American Dilemma' in Pentecostalism

Historically, racism has informed the *roots* and routes of Pentecostal organisational development.[17] From its humble beginnings in 1906 under the Black leadership of William J. Seymour at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, the movement's interracial impetus was potentially challenging to the religious and political *status quo*. According to Nelson, Seymour's concern for equality was reflected in the seating plan at the Azusa Street Mission. The pews were formed into 'a circle surrounding the pulpit and altar— all on one level'. The significance of the seating plan, says Nelson:

> ...reflected the oneness in equality Seymour envisioned. Worshippers gathered in a new way completely equal in the house of God, the body of Christ not a collection of individuals looking over the back of many heads simply to the clergy or choir but an intimate whole serving one another. This unconventional seating plan revealed Seymour's conviction that events transpiring at Azusa Mission were different, unique, and revolutionary.[18]

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[16] See Bryan Wilson, Religious Sects: A Sociological Study, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company: 1970; Ken Pryce, Endless Pressure; Malcolm Calley, God's People.
[17] This history is covered in Iain MacRobert's, The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA; see also Hollenweger's, The Pentecostals, pp.3-28.
[18] Douglas J. Nelson, *For Such a Time as This: the Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, May 1981), p.194.

Glossolalia, and the interracial gathering that became the hallmark of Azusa Street 'under the leadership of Seymour, a black minister, was truly remarkable'.[19] According to MacRobert, Seymour saw the baptism of the Holy Spirit as much more than a 'glossolalic experience', rather he saw it as 'the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy that once again the barriers between the races would be broken down by the coming of the Spirit as on Pentecost'.[20] The genesis and location of Pentecostalism as an American phenomenon, inevitably, had the potential of turning this *new century* religious movement into a radical inter-racial paradigm of Christian brotherhood with wide ranging social and political consequences half a century before Dr Martin Luther King's integrationist vision in the 1950s and 1960s.

The failure of the movement to do so is not an indication of the moral failure of the early Pentecostal pioneers, rather it can be seen as a failure to harness the socio-political imperatives of the democratic and participatory impetus of Pentecostalism as 'leaven' for the humanising[21] of interracial relations and the transformation of society.[22] Racism, the 'American dilemma', like 'the angel of death' in the Exodus narrative, did not 'pass over' early Pentecostalism. To have escaped this particular social death would have demanded a sacrificial degree of courage from white Pentecostal pioneers to *transcend* and *transgress* the mores of American society; it would also have

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[19] MacRobert, op. cit., p.55.
[20] Ibid.
[21] The humanising function of Pentecostalism is commented on by Hollenweger. 'In certain societies', argues Hollenweger, 'the Pentecostal movement is a necessary island of humanity.' (The Pentecostals, p.467)
[22] Part of the movement's proclamation under Seymour was that the 'the spiritual could bring about change in the social world; that the Holy Spirit was washing away "the colour line in the blood" of Jesus Christ'. See Iain MacRobert, *Black Pentecostalism: its Origins, Functions and Theology* (Ph.D dissertation, Birmingham University, 1989), p.476

demanded, from both black and white, a level of social solidarity and political sophistication to challenge the *status quo* and to articulate a new 'moral order' predicated on the new found 'unity in the Spirit[23]' through the phenomenon of the glossolalia.

The theology of the 'second blessing',[24] as experienced and *explained* by Pentecostals, had the potential to creatively negotiate a new social and political space for Black and White Pentecostals to image racial solidarity in a segregated society. As a metaphor for the '*unity of the Spirit*', the experience of glossolalia across the historic racial divide in America could have provided an alternative biblical and theological paradigm for de-racialisation of institutional religious life. The moral and spiritual impetus of the operation of such a practice, rooted in Pentecostal pneumatology and biblical norms and injunctions, could have created another 'Great Awakening' in America. That the political implications and spirituality of the common experience of tongues across racial boundaries (Frank Bartleman's had claimed that the 'colour line' was washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ) failed to have a significant impact on transforming mainstream social and political life,

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[23] This notion of the '*Unity of the Spirit*' is often articulated primarily as a *spiritual* construct with little or no practical or organisational imaging or configuration. Bishop Murray, General Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy, emphasised the importance and primacy of this notion in Pentecostal discourse on race and historical development. (Interview with Dr Murray: 29 March 1996 in Cleveland Tennessee, USA.) The Church of God of Prophecy took positive steps in the early 1990s to address some of the perceived developmental, pastoral, and public relations issues associated with race relations in Pentecostalism. In the mid 1990s Bishop O. Williams, Church of God of Prophecy leader in England, was transferred to the US to assist with organisational development and intercultural relations.

[24] See Donald W. Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism, N.J., & London, The Scarecrow Press, Inc: 1987, pp.87-108.

represents a failure in Pentecostal pneumatology, sociology, theology. The two Pentecostal conclaves pursuing racial reconciliation in the 1990s are sincere, but belated, attempts at rectification.

Organisationally, Pentecostalism (represented in the white schism and takeover of Seymour's leadership) was unwilling and unable to rise on the power of the Spirit above the exigencies of white supremacy and religious hegemony. The 'American dilemma' of racism in society meant, to a large extent, that this new century 'movement of the Spirit'— even with the resources of the Spirit— were no better at modelling the socio-political imperatives of the Gospel than the historic churches. Experientially, black Church of God members have felt the pain of this infraction of the 'body of Christ', and the early accommodation of the movement to the mores and cultural exigencies of American society.

4.3 Defining the Parameters of Racial Discourse in '*Pentecostal Partners*'

The need for reconciliation and healing of the legacy of racism in the Pentecostal movement was concretised in the historic *Pentecostal Partners*[25] conference. This conference marked a defining moment in Pentecostal political theology and race relations.[26] As a 'reconciliation project' between

[25] *Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry*, Memphis, Tennessee, October 17-19, 1994.

[26] According to Joel Edwards: 'Memphis opened new and relevant ways for the Pentecostal community world-wide, but especially in America, to make a significant contribution to race relations and social cohesion at the close of the twentieth century...in much the same way it had done at the beginning of the twentieth century where racial integration was practiced.' (Interview with Bishop Edwards, November 2002.) The significance of this racial integration at the Azusa Street Mission in 1906 was recognised in the statement by the Memphis Manifesto Committee: 'At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Azusa Street Mission

black and white Pentecostals, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., traced the 'black roots'[27] of Pentecostalism through the ministry of William J. Seymour; and the 'white racism' of early Pentecostalism through Charles Fox Parham.[28]

The Memphis colloquy featured four main lectures[29]: the past roots of racial unity and division were presented by Cecil Robeck; Leonard Lovett, the black church historian, presented a paper focusing on the present problem of racism in Pentecostalism; the discourse on the biblical pattern of unity was presented by William Turner; and the final lecture, on the future

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was a model of preaching and living the Gospel message in the world. We desire to drink deeply from the well of Pentecost as it was embodied in that mission. We, therefore, pledge our commitment to embrace the essential commitments of that mission in evangelism...in justice and holiness, in spiritual renewal and empowerment, and in the reconciliation of all Christians regardless of race or gender as we move into the new millennium.' (Section Xl of the Racial Reconciliation Manifesto)

[27] See Iain MacRobert, The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA, New York, St Martin's Press:1988. In this work, MacRobert places great emphasis on the leadership role of W.J. Seymour in the early multiracial period of the movement and the way in which white Pentecostal leaders reversed these social and transformatory achievements by realigning and accommodating itself to the racial and ideological configurations of American society (the DuBoisian analysis of the 'colour line').

[28] See Cecil M. Robeck, 'The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism' in *Pentecostal Partners*.

[29] See Frank D. Macchia, 'From Azusa to Memphis: Where Do We Go From Here? Roundtable Discussions on the Memphis Colloquy', in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Study for Pentecostal Studies,* Vol 18, No.1 Spring 1996, pp.113-116. There were formal responses to the main papers; Dr Lamar Vest, the General Overseer of the Church of God, responded to Cecil Robeck's paper. Tribute is paid to the role of Seymour and his perceptiveness in respect of the relationship between sanctification, tongues and racial unity: 'Although, to my knowledge, a full study of William J. Seymour's theology has yet to be written, Dr Robeck points out that the Azusa Mission, both through verbal and printed proclamation, declared itself as standing for the unity of God's people everywhere. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was seen as the unifying factor, baptizing believers by *one* Spirit into *one* body. Seymour also recognized interracial inclusiveness to be a central mark of the church. For Seymour there appeared to be a definite relationship between sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and racial unity. Sanctification *required racial unity* (emphasis added) because the heart of sanctification was love. Tongues and love were evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism. Seymour seemed to understand that tongues could be falsified but that love could not be faked over a long period of time.' See p.1 of the response to Cecil Robeck's *The Past*.

strategy for reconciliation, was presented by the white Pentecostal historian, Vinson Synan.[30]

An analysis of the documents of *Pentecostal Partners* reveal a number of organisational and historical problems in the development and formation of the Pentecostal movement; it also disclosed the centrality of racism in Pentecostal politics and polity and the failure to develop a theology and practice to deal with it. The genesis of the new religious movement in the social milieu of post-Emancipation-Reconstruction era of Jim Crow, 'separate but equal[31]', and segregation, provided fecund socio-political material for a new critical and transformatory Pentecostal theological discourse and social dialogue. However, for a host of reasons, this did not take place in any meaningful way; and a critique of racism in American became an underdeveloped Pentecostal problematic.

At the root of this underdeveloped Pentecostal problematic was the fundamental question: how can a Pentecostal movement speak with integrity to a society divided ideologically along the DuBoisian 'colour-line' when its own polity and practice mirror the racial configuration of society? Integral to the Memphis colloquy was an attempt at a political and theological

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[30] Synan's classic work on Pentecostalism (The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company:1971) makes reference to both race and class as significant factors in the development of early Pentecostalism and the complaints of Parham that under Seymour's leadership the Azusa Street movement 'extremes and fanaticism' were becoming the norm. (pp.110-113)

[31] This classic fiction of '*separate but equal*' was part of the post-Reconstruction arrangement to keep the races apart. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court (*Brown v. Board of Education*) rule it unconstitutional, giving a political impetus to the Civil Rights Movement. This decision challenged the 1896 ruling in *Plessey v. Ferguson* justifying Jim Crow practices abroad trains. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the constitutionality of a Louisiana provision keeping the races separate did not infringe Black peoples' Fourteenth Amendment rights, providing the facilities were 'separate but equal'.

archaeology of the movement's history and some of its key leaders.[32] The documents of *Pentecostal Partners* did not create an era of multi-racial unity among Pentecostals; it merely opened the door to constructive and mature discourse about racism in the 'body of Christ'. It was courageous and cathartic: courageous in the Tillichian[33] sense in being an 'ethical act' of affirmation of the Pentecostal problematic of race and racism; cathartic in that it allowed black historic pain and disappointment to surface with a view to reconciliation.

The Memphis documents, like the Cleveland, Tennessee documents, open a new chapter in the search for racial reconciliation among Pentecostals. The former disclosed the historical legacy of racism in organisational development (*inter*-Pentecostal); the latter portrayed the 'colour-line' in Church of God polity (*intra*-Pentecostal) and the theo-political response by leading US and UK black Pentecostal leaders. Many of the critical issues raised in the two colloquys were, as we shall discuss later, highlighted by the pioneering historian of the New Testament Church of God in the 1980s, Revd Ira Brooks.

Before we examine the main documents of the Memphis colloquy, and some of the post-Memphis reflections, it is worth noting the way in which Robeck defines the concept of 'racism', on the one hand, and situates the Pentecostal problematic of race, on the other hand. Considerable amount of risk-taking was demanded on both sides of the Pentecostal racial divide, as

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[32] Part of this archaeology of the movement's history and legacy was the rehabilitation of the 'apostle' of the Pentecostalism, William J. Seymour, and the notion of 'soul searching' and 'inclusive ways when addressing 'the other'. See Cecil Robeck's paper, p.64.

[33] See Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Glasgow, Collins: 1962, p.15.

was recognized by both Robeck and Clemmons. For the latter, the question was around the rhetoric and reality of white Pentecostals' readiness to eradicate racism and affirm equality:

> Why, for example, would African-American Pentecostals come to the table of dialogue with the PFNA[34] knowing that the constituencies of the member churches of PFNA were not really ready to take significant steps beyond the pious rhetoric of its leaders to eradicate racism and affirm equality?[35]

For Robeck, the risk-taking was in the form of 'power-sharing' by white Pentecostals and 'voluntarily' choosing to 'submit themselves to a form of public criticism':

> These events in Memphis, then, were newsworthy because Pentecostal leadership in North America, and especially white Pentecostal leadership, has had an extremely difficult time tolerating any form of public criticism, or for that matter, any difference of opinion from their own. To my knowledge, in the history of North American Pentecostalism, there has never been a public forum in which a constructive exchange between Pentecostal leaders and their critics was invited and made possible by the Pentecostal leaders themselves. In too many cases there has merely been defensiveness and retaliation[36].

White Pentecostals, argued Robeck, had historically benefited from remaining 'silent' on matters of racial justice, the hegemony of white supremacy and the maintenance of the *status quo*:[37]

> Within the American context, the power which is necessary to engage in this sin (racism) has traditionally been held by whites. While prejudice, discrimination, even retaliatory acts of prejudice and

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[34] Pentecostal Fellowship of North America.
[35] See his 'What Price Reconciliation: Reflections on the 'Memphis Dialogue' in *PNEUMA, Vol 18, No.1, Spring 1996,* p.117.
[36] See Robeck, 'Racial Reconciliation at Memphis: Some Personal Reflections' in *PNEUMA, Vol 18, No.1, Spring 1996, p.136.*
[37] Robeck later states that white Pentecostals were, in some cases, sympathetic of, and pandered to, America's 'conservative political agenda'. (p.59)

discrimination may be found among African-Americans, racism by its very definition within the American context cannot be laid at their feet. This is difficult for white Pentecostals to understand because they have frequently confused prejudice and discrimination with racism.[38] But racism is the sin [39] of white Americans against 'the other'. The extent to which predominantly white Pentecostal groups have benefited from maintaining the status quo within American society, the extent that they have played an active role in keeping the races separated, the extent that they have remained silent when unjust racial policies have been enforced or just racial policies have been left unenforced, they are guilty of racism. Pentecostals as a whole must identify and admit to those acts of prejudice, discrimination, and/or racism of which they are guilty before forgiveness can be given...Nothing less than repentance and conversion are acceptable.[40]

The Memphis[41] colloquy marked a defining moment in the politics and problematic of Pentecostal race relations. However, the 'groundwork for this Reconciliation Dialogue'[42] was officially laid on 31 July, 1992 in Dallas. There were two subsequent meetings before the Memphis gathering: one in

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[38] See Cornel West on racism in Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press: 1982. West gives a historic and philosophic critique of racism and Black Christian thought. Chapter, 'The genealogy of Modern Racism' offers an insightful analysis of the contribution of key Enlightenment thinkers to the formation and perpetuation of modern racism (pp.47-68); see also David Theo Goldberg (ed) Anatomy of Racism, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 1990. In his post-Memphis reflection, Leonard Lovett's impatience with racism in Pentecostalism is poignant: 'I have no room on my agenda for games. When are going to face the fact that racism is an integral, potent and virtually indestructible component of this society?...Racism still persist despite the cosmetics of countless' ecclesiastical conclaves, pseudo-political solutions and 'empty agreements' which promise change without changing anything. It is much easier to reject than refute the fact that racial reconciliation within the Pentecostal movement is nowhere near realization in our time. The dialogue was no more than a temporary 'peak of progress', a short-lived miracle that will eventually slide into irrelevance as racial patterns within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement adapt in ways that maintain and give credence to white dominance.' See his *'Looking Back to Go Forward'* in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Vol 18, No.1, Spring 1996, pp123-124

[39] See George Kelsey classic treatment of the topic in his Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man, New York, Scribner's:1965. 'Racism', says Kelsey, 'is a faith. It is a form of idolatry. It is an abortive search for meaning...Since racism assumes some segments of humanity to be defective in essential being, and since for Christians all being is from the hand of God, racism alone among the idolatries calls into question the divine creative action.' (pp.19-30)

[40] Cecil Robeck, op. cit., pp.63-64.

[41] It is significant that the Black and White Pentecostal leaders should meet for the purpose of racial reconciliation in the same state where Martin Luther King, the 'drum major for righteousness' and racial integration was assassinated on 4th April, 1968.

[42] See Bishop B.E. Underwood's letter to participants in *Pentecostal Partners*

Phoenix, Arizona, on January 4-5, 1994; and the other in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 10-11, 1994. At the Dallas meeting in 1992, ten representatives from both the African American and Euro-American Pentecostal Movement 'began discussions on this vital matter.'[43]

The Arizona meeting was attended by thirty three Pentecostal denominational leaders and pastors. Two days were spent in 'prayer and dialogue concerning this reconciliation'; and, according to Bishop Underwood, 'God spoke powerfully to the participants in this meeting.'[44] This meeting paved the way for the subsequent Memphis meetings in 1994: the January 10-11 meeting to invite 'representatives from each of the two movements to meet to make final plans for this Dialogue'[45]; the October 17-19 meeting to dissolve the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America[46] (PFNA), to address the historic racialisation of Pentecostal organisational development, and to articulate the *new agenda* of reconciliation.

Participants were aware of the historic significance of the October meeting; its political and theological imperative in revisiting old wounds and resurrecting aspects of the Azusa Street interracial paradigm were articulated by the two co-chairman of the Steering Committee, Bishop B.E. Underwood (White) and Bishop Ithiel Clemmons (Black). Underwood captures the historic significance of the Memphis gathering and its function as a defining moment in Pentecostal race relations in the continent of the movement's birth:

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] The PFNA was a white Pentecostal association.

We believe that this meeting is of great historic significance. The Board of Administration of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (which has been in existence for 46 years) has voted to recommend that this organization have its final convention on Tuesday afternoon, October 18. The purpose of this final convention will be to dissolve PFNA and to recommend that all its members become charter members of a new fellowship, which we expect to be born on Wednesday afternoon. The name of this new organisation has not been finally decided, but the proposed name is PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA.[47]

> We believe that this Reconciliation Dialogue and the birth of the new multi-racial Pentecostal fellowship is a part of God's answer to the prayer of His only begotten Son recorder in John 17. Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one even as the Father and the Son are one. The purpose of this unity is that the world may believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. May God overshadow and rule over this dialogue to guarantee that His will be done! HALLELUJAH![48]

Bishop Clemmons reminded participants of the tragic end of the interracial character of William J. Seymour's 'Azusa Street experiment' and the present challenge:

> The great challenge faced by North American Pentecostal leaders is language — theological, historiographical, cultural, ecclesiological, racial, national, political, economic...We face a formidable task of moving away from the fear-inspired, hegemonic, fundamentalistic, exclusivistic linguistics of the past to the language of inclusion needed for the future.

> True partnership initiates sharing on all levels, promoting justice as a basis of unity. This prospect of sharing on all levels, however, creates for us fearful images. Many black churches feel threatened when their white brothers draw too close. There is created immediate images of being undermined. There are feelings of positions being no longer secure, of meetings before the meeting in which ballots are cast on policy, issues, organisational structure, and programmatic design. Many white churches are wary of a formation of partnership in which blacks or other ethnics demand to be shareholders in the creation and distribution of ministry resources.

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[47] The name finally agreed upon was The Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America.

[48] Bishop Underwood, op. cit.

> The future will continue to demand patience, imagination, flexibility, honesty, openness, as well as prayerfulness and worship. It requires hard thinking and undiscouraged good will to answer the question: How can we as leaders deal with the internal emotional disturbances that our bold venture will cause so that these result not in friction but in growth and maturity that St. Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:11-16? How can we highlight the parochial, cultural attitudes rooted in white racialism that heretofore have been the cause of division in Pentecostalism without paralysing people for further action? How can we avoid romanticizing one another and together achieve a greater sense of reality?[49]

4.4 Challenging the Black-White Matrix of Social Encounter in Pentecostalism—The Missing Piece in the Memphis 'Reconciliation Strategy' Jigsaw

In spite of the defining significance of Memphis, the privileging of race and the Black-White matrix of social encounter revealed a fundamental failure in thinking about the polymorphous and dynamic nature of 'reconciliation' within the historical context of cultural and institutional inequality. The central themes of racism and racial reconciliation in Pentecostalism predominated the conceptual frame of reference and responses of the major participants, eclipsing another reality and disclosing another site of historical and cultural conflict and subjugation in Pentecostal polity and practice — the role of women and that of Pentecostal 'Latinos' in the reconciliation 'strategy'.

The 1994 Memphis conference, undoubtedly, polarised and politicised Pentecostals in ways which were probably unforeseen by the planning committee. Two streams of thought emerge in the politics of representation

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[49] *Pentecostal Partners*, p.5.

at Memphis. Firstly, it could be argued that the failure of the planning executive to involve Mexican and Latin American Pentecostals in this historic Racial Reconciliation Conference demonstrates the *underdevelopment* and insularity of Pentecostal thinking and understanding of contemporary discourse on race, discrimination, and cultural hegemony. Secondly, the history and experience of Black people in the Diaspora, and especially in America, prioritised and privileged the *Black-White matrix* of social encounter above all other ethnic encounters.

Politically, the privileging of the Black-White matrix of social encounter established an epistemological hierarchy for thinking about reconciliation in Pentecostalism. While gender, class, culture and other social matrices are worthy of consideration and examination, racial reconciliation along the Black-White matrix would predominate. Undoubtedly, there appears to be the view among the planning executive that this historic and bold move to tackle racial reconciliation in Pentecostalism would provide models, resources, and frameworks, for identifying and resolving other perceived problems of representation and marginalisation in the movement. The post-Memphis reflections of the two key participants, as we shall see below, differs radically; and the marginalisation of gender relations in Pentecostalism, and groups not fitting the privileged Black-White matrix of social encounter, were seen as serious shortcomings of Memphis by Barbara Amos[50] and Samuel Solivan respectively.

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[50] Barbara M. Amos was the only woman invited to participate as a respondent at the Memphis conference. She responded to the paper presented by Dr. William Turner ('The

Samuel Solivan, speaking from a Hispanic/Latino Pentecostal perspective, relates his reactions and disappointment with the Memphis colloquy and its privileging the politics of Black-White matrix of social encounter:

> Several days prior to the (Memphis) consultation, I was informed by Dr. Mel Robeck of the event. My initial reaction was joy, but then it turned to disappointment. I immediately asked Mel if he knew which Hispanic leaders had been invited to the consultation. He then informed me that none were invited, and that it was billed as a reconciliation between Blacks and Whites. Of those participating, half were there to represent European-American Pentecostals and the other half African-American Pentecostals. This was *very disturbing* to me. How could an event of reconciliation guided by the Holy Spirit *intentionally neglect* such a large segment of people — Hispanic Americans — who have also suffered at the hands of Pentecostalism racism and bigotry? How could it be that my Black brothers and sisters who have experience the humiliation of racism leave others who share in their suffering and neglect outside the gate? Is the Holy Spirit only calling for the repentance of only the sins of racism perpetuated against African Americans? Is racism against Hispanics and Native Americans [51] to be ignored or justified? Does the Holy Spirit suffer from selective amnesia? How can this happen? [52]

The construction of the Black-White matrix for Pentecostal dialogue raised further questions for Solivan. Although he conceded the priority of '*race*' in the theology and politics of reconciliation in American Pentecostalism, the question of plural responsibility on the part of the dominant cultural group

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Ideal: The Biblical Pattern of Unity'). She is a Bishop in the Mt. Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc., and Pastor at Faith Deliverance Christian Centre in Norfolk, Virginia.

[51] In commenting on the Enlightenment, 'white theology' and the problem of faith and history in the politics of enslavement and the extermination of native Americans, Cone says: 'For black and red peoples in North America, the spirit of the Enlightenment was socially and politically demonic, becoming a pseudo-intellectual basis for their enslavement or extermination.' (God of the Oppressed, p. 46; see also Aloysius Pieris, An Asian Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books:1988)

[52] Samuel Solivan, 'A Hispanic/Latino Pentecostal Response', in *PNEUMA*, Vol.18 No. 1, Spring 1966, pp.128-129.

to be reconciled to *all* groups who suffered oppression and discrimination at its hands became a central issue for Solivan.

Equally important was the theoretically controversial notion of linguistic imperialism in Pentecostalism, and ways in which Pentecostals fall 'prey to a political agenda of English'. The absence of other minority groups around the 'table of reconciliation' at the Memphis colloquy is seen by Solivan as *intentional*, privileging African-Americans and politically empowering them to represent, and speak on behalf of, other marginalized and disenfranchised groups:

> It seems to me that this absence was not unintentional. Often in the past European-Americans believed that by speaking to African-Americans they had fulfilled their responsibilities, thinking that Blacks represent *all* other people of color. African-Americans also historically have assumed to speak for all minorities. This attitude is the result of allowing the world to dictate the conditions and the resolution of the conflict. The impact of European-American racism and bigotry goes much further than offending African-Americans. The scriptures call us to be reconciled with all those against whom we have sinned. Not just the ones that are more politically advantaged of socially obvious...Hispanic Americans span the spectrum of colour...We are a rainbow people. When we are not discriminated against for our culture, we are for our language. English speaking monolingual North American Pentecostals often dismiss, oppress, and/or ignore the presence and or contributions made by Latino Pentecostals because we speak Spanish and/or because we are non-white. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit affirmed the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Church. The Spirit did not suspend the multicultural, multi-lingual character of the Church; *she* empowered it for mission and evangelism. Today Pentecostals have often fallen prey to a political agenda of English only that flies in the face of the design of creation and the order of salvation. What makes us one is not the idolatry of language but the infilling of the Spirit. Racism manifests itself in many ways. Ethnic, cultural, and linguistic oppression is one of them. The tyranny of the English language often endangers the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of the Church of Jesus Christ. [53]

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[53] Ibid., pp. 129-130.

The real challenge of Memphis, according to Solivan, is to go beyond the 'monochrome' paradigm of the Black-White Pentecostal matrix of reconciliation to the 'metaphor of the rainbow'[54] of ethnic inclusiveness and diversity. Posing the question as to why the 'gate was closed to us'[55] — why Hispanic/Latino Pentecostals were not invited to participate — Solivan offers a metaphor for the *underdevelopment* of Pentecostal political consciousness and political education. This was a poignant reminder of the need to *engage* in the political and cultural discourse for justice and 'righteousness' *in* the world and *in* the Church. Solivan concludes his critique with a prayer. Apart from it being a prayer for those ecclesiastical gatekeepers who have *excluded* him and others from the initial reconciliation dialogue, the prayer also has a dual function. On the one hand, it intimates the need for a Pentecostal political and cultural theology that avoids privileging the Black-White matrix of social and historical encounter as the point of departure for dialogue and reconciliation in Pentecostalism and society, thereby avoiding the mistake of reducing other groups and concerns to *invisibility* and namelessness. On the other hand, there is the prophetic mandate to proclaim 'your Kingdom and Lordship', a recognition of *ipso facto* plural (poly-ethnic) responsibility to diverse communities:

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[54] Ibid., p.131.

[55] Solivan says: 'While Memphis focused on Black/White relations, our next steps must bring us to attend to the reconciliation needed between Blacks and Hispanics and Whites with Hispanics. Until then we Hispanics/Latinos stand outside the gate not because we chose to but because the gate was closed to us. Could it be that we have not been invited to speak because they do not yet know we exist? Thank the Lord and Holy Spirit that we know *you know* we exist and you filled us with your blessed and empowering Holy Spirit.'

We pray for them for we know they exist and are our brothers and sisters. While we wait for them to know what you already know we will continue to work your vineyard until you return for us. We know you know us and have given us a prophetic voice to proclaim your Kingdom and Lordship among the nations to all people of every tribe and nation. Amen.[56]

Although there is not a sustained 'womanist'[57] critique of Memphis, Amos does allude to the problems of sexism in Pentecostalism and its organisational and political problems. The predominance of women in the Pentecostal churches, on the one hand, and their relative invisibility in positions of leadership and power, on the other hand, is a fundamental theological and practical problem in black and white Pentecostal organisations in the US and the UK. Historically, the relative *invisibility* of women in the leadership of Black churches has been seen as major weakness of the third stage (1969-1977) of Black Theology. The dominant focus of this period was 'the failings of white North American theology, especially its

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[56] Op. cit., p.132.

[57] Womanist theology is not only an attempt to make *visible* the insights and experiences of women in theological reflection, but it is also a critique of patriarchal hegemony and structures of society. The critical question posed by Jacquelyn Grant over two decades ago have as much relevance for theologians and churches on both sides of the racial divide: 'Black men must ask themselves a difficult question. How can a White society characterized by Black enslavement, colonialism, and imperialism provide the normative conception of women for Black society? How can the sphere of the woman, as defined by White men, be free from the evils and oppressions that are found in White society? The important point is that in matters relative to the relationship between the sexes, Black men have accepted without question the patriarchal structures of the White society as normative for the Black community...Many Black women are enraged as they listen to 'liberated' Black men speak about the 'place of women' in words and phrases similar to those of the very White oppressors they condemn.' (See Grant, 'Black Theology and the Black Woman', in Wilmore and Cone, BTDH, p.421. In womanist theological discourse there is the creative attempt to develop a politics of 'wholeness', i.e., a political strategy that emphasises what Kelly Brown Douglas refers to as the 'multidimensional' and 'bifocal' aspect of Black social reality, 'eliminating anything that prevents Black people from being whole, liberated people, and from living as a whole, unified community'. (See her 'Womanist Theology: What is its relationship to Black Theology?', p.295 in Cone and Wilmore (ed) Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1980 –1992, Volume 2, New York, Orbis Books:1993.)

silence on racial justice and the white racism within mainstream establishment churches and religious agencies'.[58]

Given the fact that the community of the oppressed is often the *locus* of Black theology, the dialectical relationship between racism and sexism, and the ecclesiastical dynamics between sexism and power in the Black church, becomes both a theological and political problematic for Black theology. Indeed, it creates another arena of spiritual and ethical struggle, engendering a female hermeneutic of suspicion[59] by the oppressed *within* the community of the oppressed.[60]

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[58] See Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance (especially chapter 4, 'Prophetic Afro-American Thought and Progressive Marxism', p.104.

[59] See Renita J Weems 'Womanist Reflections on Biblical Hermeneutics' in James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore (ed) Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1980-1992, Volume 2; also in the same volume Delores S. Williams 'Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices' and Kelly Brown Douglas 'Womanist Theology: What is its relationship to Black Theology?'; see also Kelly Brown Douglas' The Black Christ, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books:1994; Delores S. Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, Maryknoll, New York:1993; Marcia Y. Riggs, Awake, Arise, and Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation, Cleveland, Pilgrim Press: 1994; James Ella James, "It's How Women 'Read' Their 'Titles Clear' " in Vincent L. Wimbush (ed), African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures, New York & London, Continuum: 2001.

[60] The double oppression of women *within* the Black church is a critical issue for Cone. This problem was acknowledged by Cone in his essays entitled 'New Roles in the Ministry' and 'Black theology and the Black Church: where do we go from here?' In the latter essay the recognition of the analytical connectedness between 'imperialism and sexism' constitute part of the truth of which Black Theology was not afraid to deal with, and which is integral to the extension of 'our vision of a new socially constructed humanity for the whole inhabited world'. The former essay addresses critically the role of women in the Black church, arguing that the subordination of women in the Black church is inconsistent with the Biblical message; and the critique of, and protestations against, racism by Black theologians and church leaders must have corresponding equivalence in legitimising Black Theology's 'authenticity' and 'commitment': 'For obvious reasons, this is not an easy subject for me to talk about in that I, like most, have been socially conditioned to accept what White culture has defined as the women's place in the church and society. And even though I may assert the liberation of Black women, that public assertion only is no guarantee that I truly share the commitment that Black women should not be oppressed by anyone, including Black male clergy. But regardless of the question that may remain about the validity of my conversation, the gospel is quite clear on this matter. The gospel bears witness to the God who is against oppression in any form, whether inflicted on an oppressed group from the outside or arises from within an oppressed community...Therefore, people who claim to believe in the biblical God and also claim that this God supports the subordination of women to men have not really understood the Bible. They have distorted it and thus confused cultural limitations and errors with the message itself...God has created man and woman as

In exorcising the demon of racism in Pentecostalism, argues Amos, 'the momentum must allow us to be sensitive to these other issues'. The theology and politics of gender relations experienced by Amos at the Memphis conference illustrate aspects of the womanist critique of Pentecostalism and the 'malady in the body of Christ':

> Being a female in ministry has at times been extremely controversial. I must admit that at the Memphis Reconciliation meeting in October 1994, I encountered brothers who refused to remain in prayer and dialogue groups with my female presence. Other brothers in the groups apologized and seemed appalled and embarrassed, by a scenario that is relatively routine to me as a young African-American female. This display of prejudice and bigotry — even if classified isolated — coupled with my lone female presence is indicative of a serious malady in the body of Christ. Again, the integrity of the church is undermined...Reconciliation cannot be limited to concerns of racial prejudice and discrimination. Such a limitation will be a disappointment to the millions of women who comprise our church bodies. It is hypocritical, to say the least, to affirm racial equality and simultaneously condone gender disparity by participating in discriminatory practices and/or silence on the issue.[61]

4.5 The Genealogy of Racism and American Pentecostal Beneficiaries

Challenged by the racial tensions and the fractured unity in 'the body of Christ', the Memphis Racial Reconciliation Manifesto (RRM) was an attempt

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equals, that is, as co-partners in service of freedom...If we are to be true ministers of the gospel, then we must create new roles for everyone so that the distinctions man and woman for the purpose of domination are no longer a reality for our churches. We must liberate our own community from its own internal destructiveness, so that we will be free to fight against oppression in the larger society. It is a contradiction for Black men to protest against racism in the White church and society at large and then fail to apply the same critique to themselves in their relation to Black women...Accordingly, the test of the authenticity of our commitment to freedom is found not only in what we say about freedom generally, but what we do about the liberation of victims within our community. We cannot support a subordinate ministry for women and also claim to be for the liberation of the oppressed. (pp.394-395) See also Renita J. Weems 'Womanist Reflections on Biblical Hermeneutics' in Cone and Wilmore (ed) Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II, 1980-1992, pp.216-224.

[61] Barbara Amos, 'Race, Gender and Justice', in *PNEUMA*, Vol.18 No. 1, Spring 1966, pp.133-134.

to face up to the historic racialisation of Pentecostal development (at the 'behest of the Holy Spirit'). The preamble to the RRM states:

> Challenged by the reality of our racial divisions, we have been drawn by the Holy Spirit to Memphis, Tennessee, October 17-19, 1994 in order to become true 'Pentecostal Partners and to develop together 'A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry.' We desire to covenant together in the ongoing task of racial reconciliation by committing ourselves to the following agenda.[62]

The agenda consisted of eleven commitments/pledges to work together to 'oppose racism prophetically' (I), and to 'live with an openness to authentic liberation which is a product of Divine Creation, until the shackles fall and all bondages cease' (X). The theme of racism finds congruence in both Lovett and Robeck. The latter's paper is by far the longest of the Memphis documents, disclosing the origin, development and the fracture of the interracial fellowship of Azusa Street under Seymour's leadership. Lovett's shorter paper is decidedly militant and polemic,[63]reminding Pentecostals of the legacy of racism and its definitional problems.

Racism has its own logic and justification, and often the definitions are as numerous as the social and intellectual communities attempting to define the concept. Politically, and etymologically, the problem with the notion of 'racism' is that the definition often needs 'multiple qualification and elaboration to the extent that they fail to be definitions by definition'.[64]

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[62] See 'Racial Reconciliation Manifesto' in *Pentecostal Partners.*

[63] A similar militancy and impatience with the cosmetics of countless ecclesiastical conclaves which 'promise change without changing anything' was displayed at the Church of God '*Unity of the Spirit* Conference' in Cleveland, Tennessee, in March 1996.

[64] See R. David Muir, 'Where Do We Go From Here? Black Christian Politics After Stephen Lawrence', in *International Review of Missions: The Africia Christian Diaspora in Europe and the Quest for Human Community*, Vol. LXXXIX No.354, July 2000, p.306.

The 'colour-line' (DuBois[65]), the 'colour problem' (André Siegfried[66]) or the 'American Dilemma', (Gunnar Myrdal[67]) all illustrate and attempt to define the concept of racism and its institutional and social manifestation; they also demonstrate the provisional and historical contingent nature of the concept's genealogy.

In introducing the concept of racism into Pentecostal ecclesiology, Memphis participants could not avoid the genealogy of racism in North American social and cultural discourse.[68] Equally important in the discourse was the need to understand, and theologically disclose, ways in which white Pentecostals have benefited from racialised and hegemonic nature of white American religious institutions. Lovett and Robeck recognised this in their point of departure and definition of the racism. Before defining racism, Robeck considers two other concepts associated with the lexicography of racism: prejudice and discrimination. According to Robeck, prejudice

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[65] See his Souls of Black Folk.

[66] Andrea Siegfried, America Comes of Age, London, Jonathan Cape: 1927 (Translated from the French by H.H. Hemming and Doris Hemming), especially chapter VI 'The Colour Problem'. Seigfried very much adopts and accepts the inferiority thesis of the 'Negro race'. In putting forward the Southerners' perspective he states: 'The negro, they say, is acknowledged to be an inferior race that has been degraded by slavery and is not susceptible to education. He must be ruthlessly kept at the bottom of the ladder as God intended, and it is absolutely impious to try to alter him. It is only at this level that he can be useful to the community, and as long as he is content to remain there forever without trying to rise, they will admit that they are very fond of him individually and that he has great charm...They will do everything to keep him in his place—violence, massacre, and even torture.' (pp.92-93)

[67] Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers: 1944.

[68] See John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History America, New York, Alfred A Knopf: 1947; Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit.; Ronald Segal, The Race War, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1967; Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books:1990, especially pp. 3-48; James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power; Gayraud Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People, New York, Orbis Books: 1973

obtains in all groups (a universal phenomenon) and stereotype is a function of 'racial prejudice':

> Anyone of any color is capable of prejudice based upon racial or ethnic differences. Prejudice involves making a judgment before you have all the facts. It is a willingness to accept something which is unproven. Racial prejudice frequently thrives on the use of a stereotype or on unfavourable portrayal of a person of another colour, race, or ethnic group. It is an *attitudinal* issue based upon inadequate or inaccurate presuppositions or biases. It detracts from the full humanity of others by not taking them seriously in all their God-given uniqueness as fellow creatures made in the image of God.[69]

In many respects Robeck's understanding of 'racial prejudice' and 'discrimination' is not too dissimilar to the views of Appiah, especially the former's view on the function of stereotypes. For Robeck, prejudice, like discrimination, can 'dehumanise' and 'depersonalize' the *other*.[70] It can be argued that there is a thin, possibly dangerous, line between '*racial prejudice*', '*racialism*', and *racism*. As a nineteenth century preoccupation, the doctrine of racialism was predicated on the notion that 'there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race.'[71]

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[69] Robeck, op. cit., p.5.

[70] Robeck comments on the military function of depersonalising 'the enemy': 'For centuries we have trained our soldiers to look at the enemy in depersonalized and dehumanized ways by labelling our enemies with epithets like 'nips', 'japs', 'krauts', 'huns', 'gooks', and so on. We did this so that our soldiers would have fewer psychological barriers to cross when it becomes necessary for them to kill the enemy. An enemy who is depersonalised, who is made to appear less than fully human, is easier to kill than one who, like me, is made in the image of God.' (p.6)

[71] See Kwame A. Appiah, In My Father's House: African in the Philosophy of Culture, London, Methuen: 1992, pp.18-19.

According to Appiah, racialism is 'not, in itself, a doctrine that must be dangerous, even if the racial essence is thought to entail moral and intellectual dispositions.' The danger, argues Appiah, lies in a 'presupposition of other doctrines that have been called "racism"; and these other doctrines have been, in the last few centuries, the basis of a great deal of human suffering and the source of a great deal of moral error.'[72]

The 'invisible' and 'sophisticated' nature of racism is central to Robeck's definition, as well as the requirement of 'power' for its institutionalisation and maintenance. Among the other characteristics of racism, two fundamental factors are recognised: firstly, racism is taught and learned; and secondly, the power relations in American society make racism a 'white problem':[73]

> ...racism is frequently invisible to the perpetrator. It is subtle. It is insidious. It is camouflaged. It often comes in sophisticated and devious garb. I would even venture to say that it is one of the most deniable of all sins in which white Christians, including Pentecostals, participate. Again it is like the blows upon Rodney King, but this time justified on the basis that those doing the bashing are just doing their job... No one is ever born a racist. One has to develop a prejudice

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[72] Ibid., p.19.

[73] Racism as a 'white problem' changes the focus of racial discourse and theory; it points to, and discloses, the psychological, social and economic explanations and justifications of the dehumanisation of the 'other'. In short, it changes the vocabulary of social communication and relations by problematising and making 'White' attitude to Blacks the problem, and not the Black presence. This alternative perspective is argued by Lerone Bennett in his Confrontation: Black and White (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1966). According to Bennett, the issue is about asking the right questions about the 'fears and frailities of white people': 'We do not come up with the right answers to our problem because we seldom ask ourselves the right question. *There is no Negro problem in America; there has never been a Negro problem in America—the problem of race in America is a white problem...*' (author's italics, pp. 254-255). In Siegfried's analysis the discourse is constructed as a 'coloured problem'—a problem of the other. The assumptions, norms and sentiments are unreflective. See also the classic work of Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812, Baltimore, Penguin Books:1969; Lowell H. Harrison, The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky, Kentucky, The University Press of Kentucky:1978; Mechal Sobel, Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press:1979.

against another race and be given power to act on that prejudice at a variety of levels in order to be classed as a racist[74]. Racism requires the presence of both prejudice and power. In American society, then, those who have had the primary access to power have been white. Racism is a white problem, but it is so much a part of the fabric of what it means to be white in this country that whites seldom really think about it. It has been institutionalised so well in American law and society that it is the way white Americans live.[75]

Undoubtedly, Robeck's definition and treatment of racism would have been uncomfortable for many of the white Pentecostal leaders, but reassuring and congruent with the history and experience of Black Pentecostal participants.

Most white religionist, including Pentecostals, would have been familiar with King's classic *Letter From Birmingham Jail* to 'My dear Fellow Clergymen' and its powerful religious oratory and imagery. King's radical impatience, and the call for white Christian solidarity in the African-American struggle for justice, were eloquently expressed in the letter. The Black preaching style of repetition is used with great effect: King uses the word *when* twelve times in one long sentence, resolving his argument for the urgency of social and legal equality with his poignant *then*. This classic piece of socio-political oratory is contextualised by King's argument about the ease with which those who have not 'felt the stinging darts of segregation' to say, 'Wait.':

> But *when* you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; *when* you have

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[74] The view that one needs both 'prejudice' and 'power' is historically accurate. However, one can be racist without the accruement of 'power to act on that prejudice', as Robeck argues. Indeed, one can be racist and hold racist views based on the 'cognitive incapacity', according to Appiah, to give up certain beliefs which play a part in justifying or *privileging* their positions in the social order. (Appiah, op. cit., p.20) In functional terms, one can be a racist to the extent that one believes that inferiority and superiority is a function of race.

[75] Robeck, op. cit., pp.7-8.

seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalise and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; *when* you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smouldering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society... are humiliated day in and day out by the nagging signs reading 'white' and 'coloured'; *when* your first name becomes 'nigger' and your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John', and *when* your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs.'; *when* you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; *when* you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness' ; *then* you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.[76]

Articulated with the same degree of impatience as King, Lovett's treatment of race relations in Pentecostal ecclesiology is no less challenging. In Lovett's analysis there are echoes of the three strands of African-American critical race discourse. There is King's [77] liberal religious reconciliation agenda; Cone's[78] radical theological critique of racism, and West's[79] philosophic-prophetic critique.

White Pentecostals are accused of blatant racism; they are also charged with practising 'genetic engineering'; and, like Cone's accusations of white theologians' indifference in the face of Black dehumanisation and

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[76] Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Letter From Birmingham City Jail', in James Melvin Washington (ed), A Testimony of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., San Francisco, Harper & Row: 1986, pp.292-293. The theme reaches its climax thus: 'There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the blackness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.'

[77] See his famous *I have a Dream* speech, 28 August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, op. cit., pp.217-220; Strength to Love, New York, Harper & Row:1963; *Black Power Defined*, in Washington, op. cit., pp.303-312; *The Ethical Demands for Integration* (1963), in Washington, op. cit., pp.117-125; see also John J. Ansbro, Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Making of a Mind, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books:1984.

[78] Especially in A Black theology of Liberation, and God of the Oppressed.

[79] Cornel West, Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the Crisis in American Religion and Culture, Michigan and New Jersey, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Africa world Press:1988, pp. 97-108; also his Prophesy Deliverance.

oppression, they are also accused of remaining silent on key issues affecting Black people. In defining the terrain of racism, Lovett goes beyond the phonological and cultural, including the political-economy and institutional power relations. Racism is defined thus:

> From a socio-political perspective, racism exists when one group intentionally or unintentionally refuses to share power and resources, maintain inflexible institutional practices, procedures, policies, justifies its actions by blaming the victim and subjugating persons on the basis of the pigmentation of their skin. It is to embrace notions of White supremacy. At least four interacting and related historical and sociological factors undergird racism, which is also prejudice linked with power. They are historical and cultural conditioning, psychological conditioning, and social structure.[80]

Cone's theological critique of racism and its individual, institutional and cultural manifestation are used to inform Lovett's analysis. In his attempt to illustrate how individual racism functions and 'suggests belief in the superiority of one race over another and the behavioural enactments that maintain those superior and inferior positions' (or when superiority and inferiority becomes *a function of race* as stated earlier), Lovett cites the example of Abraham Lincoln— as one 'of our revered presidents most noted for having emancipated the slaves (for political expediency only)':

> I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. I am not, nor ever have been, in favor in making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor qualifying them to hold office...I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white man and the black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together, there must be the position of

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80 *The Present: The Problem of Racism in the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement*, p.3.

> superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.[81]

To lay the charge of racism at the feet of one of America's most cherished personalities in the political iconography of African-American struggle for freedom and equality, focused the Memphis colloquy, and especially those who saw racism as a benign moral aberration, on the social structures and political *institutions* of American society.

The views expressed by Lovett are congruent with those of Cone and West[82]; they are also consistent with his post-Memphis reflection. Although Cone's theological critique of racism in America is much more sophisticated and sustained than Lovett's in this context, the common thread is the pervading nature of the phenomenon and its institutional, ontological and psychological[83] effects. Cone argues that American society is systematically

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[81] *The Present*, p.4. See also John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom—A History of Negro Americans, New York, Alfred A Knopf: 1974, 4th Edition (originally published in 1947).

[82] The philosophic-prophetic critique of West is invoked as part of the critical tools needed for racial reconciliation. In his Prophetic Thought in Post-Modern Times, Vol.1, West identifies four critical elements needed to take the discourse on race beyond Euro-centricism and multiculturalism to a higher level of 'prophetic thought'; these are 'discernment', 'connection', 'tracking hypocrisy' and 'hope'.

[83] Frantz Fanon deals with aspects of what he calls the 'psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem' in his Black Skin, Black Masks, London, Pluto Press: 1986, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, originally published in 1952. Like DuBois' 'double consciousness', Fanon speaks of a 'double process'. This 'double process' is primarily economic, but it is also psychological. Critical to the psychology of the 'double process' is the notion of 'internalisation', or, what Fanon calls, 'the epidermalization' of 'an inferiority complex' (p13). Existential deviation is forced on the Negro in his attempt to discover 'the meaning of black identity' through the prism and cultural matrix of whiteness. There is 'a fixed concept of the Negro' informing Euro-centric anthropology and epistemology. According to Fanon, even that which is called 'the black soul' is the 'white man's artifact'. (p.16) Black imitation of European aesthetic, 'existential deviation', ontological and psychological dissonance whether experienced as DuBoisian '*double-consciousness*' or Fanonian '*double process*' are foreshadowed in the writings of Edward Blyden in the nineteenth century. In Blyden, one detects how Fanon's 'existential deviation' forced upon the Negro by white civilisation and European culture becomes both pathological and 'parasitical'. The thesis is best exemplified in his classic essay on *Christianity and the Negro Race:* 'The Negro in Christian lands,

structured and deliberately ordered 'on the basis of racism'[84], that racism 'is so embedded in this country that it is hard to imagine that any white man can escape it'.[85] His central argument is not only the racist nature of American society, but also the racism of white theologians. As beneficiaries of the *status quo,* their silence in the face of the historic dehumanisation, says Cone, points to their complicity:

> Most of the time American theology has simply remained silent, ignoring the condition of the victims of this racist society. How else can we explain the theological silence during the period of white lynching of black humanity in this nation? How else can we explain the inability of white religionists to deal relevantly with the new phenomenon of black consciousness? And how else can we explain the problem white seminaries are having as they seek to respond to radical black demands? There is only one answer: American theology is racist; it identifies theology as dispassionate analysis of 'the tradition', unrelated to the suffering of the oppressed...White theologians, not having felt the sting of oppression, will find it most difficult to criticize this nation for the condemnation of America means a condemnation of self.[86]

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however learned in books, cannot be said to have such a thing as self-education. His knowledge, when brought to the test, often fails him. And why? Because he is taught from the beginning to the end of his book-training—from the illustrated primer to the illustrated scientific treatise—*not to be himself*, but somebody else...From the lessons he every day receives, a Negro consciously imbibes the conviction that to be a great man he must be like the white man. He is not brought up—however he may desire it—to be the companion, the equal, the comrade of the white man, but his imitator, his ape, his parasite...To be as like the white man as possible—to copy his outward appearance, his peculiarities, his manners...that is the aim of the Christian Negro—that is his aspiration...Every intelligent Negro, in the land of his exile, must feel that he walks upon the face of God's earth a physical and moral incongruity, and as legitimate a subject of laughter...' See his Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, Baltimore, Black Classic Press: 1994 (first published in 1888), pp. 43-44. The conclusion of Blyden's argument is an unfavourable one when the position of the Black Christian is compared with the Black Muslim: 'The Mohammedan Negro is a much better Mohammedan than the Christian Negro is a Christian, because the Muslim Negro, as a learner, is a disciple, not an imitator... The one becomes a capable man; the other is a mere sciolist.' See also Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro, Trenton, N.J., Africa World Press:1993 (originally published in 1933 by The Associated Publishers).

[84] James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p.13.

[85] Ibid., p.16.

[86] James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, pp.46-49.

It is Lovett's understanding of Cone's, and West's, identification of the pervasive nature of racism with the history, ideology, defining moments, and institutions, of America that makes criticism of Lincoln inescapable. The question of racism in Pentecostalism, according to Lovett, must be related to the wider genealogy of racism in defining American history and European civilisation as restated by Cone, West and others. The opening paragraph of David Brion Davis's seminal treatment of slavery in Western culture begins by alluding to the paradox and contradiction of the founding document of American freedom:

> Americans have often been embarrassed when reminded that the Declaration of Independence was written by a slaveholder and that Negro slavery was a legal institution in all thirteen colonies at the beginning of the Revolution. 'How is it,' asked Samuel Johnson, 'that we hear the loudest *yelps* for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?' The inconsistency was not overlooked by American Tories, who exhibited it as proof of the rebel's hypocrisy. Even English liberals who sympathised with the Revolution were disturbed by a conception of liberty that seemed to exclude the Negro race. During the struggle with Great Britain, American leaders often admitted that slavery was contrary to the principles for which they fought, and a number of reformers warned that the Revolution could be justified only by a decision to rid the land of slavery.[87]

The designation by Lovett of 'institutional racism' and 'cultural racism' as 'conscious manipulation of institutions to achieve racist ends', and as 'expressions of the superiority of one's race's cultural heritage over that of another race', respectively, conforms to West's treatment of the subject. The 'racist ends' and 'expressions of superiority' identified by Lovett are central

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[87] David B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture, New York, Cornell University Press:1966, p.3.

to the West's argument concerning the relationship between racism and the 'Enlightenment'.

There is a degree of congruence in the conceptual and political understanding of racism in society and in the church by Lovett and Robeck, pre-and post-Memphis. At Memphis, Robeck argued that racism seldom 'emerges today in white sheets and burning crosses'. However, it frequently 'clothes itself within respectable institutions and their policies thereby allowing racism to hide behind institutional practice'.[88] Post-Memphis, Robeck maintained that the charge of racism was still a 'mystery' to many white Pentecostals; many felt politically and historically removed from the phenomenon, arguing:

> 'I've never owned slaves. I'm not even sure that anyone in my family has ever owned slaves. But even if they did, what am I supposed to do?'[89]

The views of some white Pentecostal leaders, according to Robeck, demonstrate the need for an adequate understanding of the historical and political context of the discourse of race and racism in American society and its influence on Pentecostal history and organisational development. It also illustrate a number of cognitive and ideological blind-spots that needs to be acknowledged if the '*terms of the conversation*' on race and racism in Pentecostalism are to be meaningfully understood and used as a basis for change.

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[88] Robeck, *Pentecostal Partners*, p.8.
[89] Robeck, 'Racial Reconciliation at Memphis: Some personal Reflection'. In *PNEUMA*, Vol.18 No.1 1996, p.138.

The key Memphis protagonists were keen to frame the terms of the conversation on racism in Pentecostalism in both socio-political and linguistic terms, with a view to arriving at a meaningful and critical theology of reconciliation— i.e., a theology as critical reflection on Pentecostal praxis.[90] Sixteen months after Memphis, Robeck admitted that white Pentecostal leaders 'do not yet understand the problem (of racism) any better'[91] than the laity do. The Memphis 'event', the Memphis 'miracle in the making', as Robeck termed it, facilitated an occasion for intercultural learning and search for a 'genuine Pentecostal ecclesiology' which understands, and deals with, the politics of racism in the Pentecostal movement. In dealing with this racism Robeck argues against tokenism, and the co-option of Black people in white institutions as a means of assuaging 'white guilt':

> The attempt to overcome racism is more than inventing new positions in leadership structures within our respective fellowships in order to find a place for ethnic/or racial minority candidates to serve. Their presence in such positions can contribute to the overall solution to the destructive problems of racism, but more often they become presence without any real power. It is a form of marginalisation which assuages white guilt because they can point to their success of giving a presence to a minority representative, but they can now overlook the reason that they believed it was necessary to grant the presence... We need

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[90] See Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, London, SCM Press, 1974. Gutierrez sees theology as 'critical reflection on praxis', the theological unity, and logical necessity, of thought and action. 'Knowing God', according to Gutierrez, 'is to do justice'. (p.110). The dialectic of *knowing* and *doing* is central to prophetic Christian thought and in the theology of James Cone as it is in Marxist thought. What Marx stated in the eleventh of his '*Thesis on Feuerbach*' (1845) could easily apply to theologians: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it.' Karl Marx, Early Writing, London, Penguin Books in Association with New Left Review:1975 (Introduced by Lucio Colletti, translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton), p.423.

[91] Robeck, 'Racial Reconciliation...', p.138. Robeck later states: 'I must hasten to add that I do not believe that Pentecostal leaders who are in the Black community or in any Pentecostal community which was not a participant in Memphis have all the answers either. They are open for suggestions.'

> help, theological help, in discovering a genuinely Pentecostal ecclesiology...a genuinely Pentecostal theology.[92]

4.6 Black Radical Perspective on Memphis and Hermeneutics of Suspicion

In Lovett's post-Memphis analysis, three critical issues emerge: firstly, cynicism about the efficacy of the Memphis event in light of the urgency and rhetoric of the 'Racial Reconciliation Manifesto'; secondly, the manifestation of the *hermeneutics of suspicion* informing the appointment of the African American Bishop Ithiel Clemmons as Chairperson of the new Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA); and thirdly, the absence of meaningful personal change and institutional challenge by white Pentecostals to racism in society. In his Memphis paper Lovett suggested that white Pentecostals had historically practised 'genetic engineering' and 'birth control'[93] with racial and hegemonic intentions; he also stated that the 'lack of repentance on the part of Whites to collectively view themselves as racist' and 'tokenism' were 'the two basic impediments to racial reconciliation within the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement'.[94]

The perceived lack of progress on these two 'basic' issues is, partly, responsible for Lovett's disappointment and cynicism about transforming white Pentecostal attitudes, and offering a Pentecostal paradigm of racial partnership and reconciliation to the wider society, prompting his critical post-Memphis remarks.

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[92] Ibid., pp.138-139.
[93] Op. cit., p.6.
[94] Ibid., p.15.

> I am disturbed about the future of racial reconciliation within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. To label what took place in Memphis in October of 1994 the 'Memphis Miracle' was premature. If we are labelling a 'miracle' the historic gathering of representatives from major Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations for the first time in almost a century, perhaps there may be some justification for the use of the term. In hindsight what took place in Memphis was no more than cosmetic to say the least. I am disturbed for several reasons...When the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America was organised in 1948, the purpose was to promote fellowship among Pentecostal denominations. African-American Pentecostals were excluded then and throughout its history only token measures were taken to welcome Black participation.[95]

Lovett's suggestion that the politics of Pentecostal power and control were still informed by racism in the process of appointing a Black Bishop as the first Chairperson of the new PCCNA had the effect of resurrecting the hermeneutics of suspicion on the part of Black Pentecostals.

This hermeneutic would suggests that the appointment had a degree of 'tokenism' (Lovett associates this concept with the social stratification which took place on the plantations and likens it to Blacks 'who enjoy the privileges of living in the big house on the plantation and who enjoys the accolades of being selected by "the man" to perform a particular task) in it'. In conceptual terms, the same argument was advanced by Robeck in warning against the institutional co-option of black 'presence' 'without any real power' merely to 'assuage white guilt'. The perceived racialisation of power and control in the new PCCNA, and the apparent lack of resources at the disposal of the new African- American Chairperson, were key determinants in Lovett's disappointment and suspicion:

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95 Lovett, 'Looking Backward to Go Forward' in *PNEUMA, Vol.18 No.1 Spring 1996*, p.122.

Control was a primary issue then and remains an issue to this day. While Bishop Ithiel Clemmons of the Church of God in Christ was chosen to chair the new organisation (Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America), it is questionable whether he has received the support given to previous chairpersons of the organisation. I now suspect (Bishop) Clemmons was chosen as chairman of PCCNA out of white guilt rather than a genuine desire of whites to be led by an African-American. Until white Pentecostal-Charismatics make good the promises and commitments made during the Memphis gathering first by supporting the new chairman with their resources, all else will be written off as 'much ado about nothing'.[96]

The misgivings about real and *meaningful* responses to personal and institutional racism caused Lovett to reflect upon his role in drafting the 'Memphis Manifesto', especially Sections I and II. 'In post-reflection', says Lovett, 'I now believe I was under deep conviction of the Holy Spirit when I wrote the portion that stated':

> I pledge in concert with my brothers and sisters of many hues to *oppose racism prophetically* in all its various manifestations *within and without the body of Christ* and to be vigilant in the struggle with all my God-given might...I am further committed to work against all forms of personal and institutional racism.[97]

Honesty and realism are critical points of departure in the politics of Pentecostal discourse on race and racism; the 'future' and the past are dialectically and racially linked; and healing and resolution can only be brought about, according to Lovett, when individuals and institutions 'oppose racism prophetically':

> It is unrealistic to expect us to prepare for a new future without honestly and realistically assessing our past. The key words in the statements above are 'to oppose racism prophetically in all its various

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[96] Ibid., p.122.
[97] Ibid., p.123; see also *Pentecostal Partners.*

manifestations'. I have scanned the media since last October listening to at least one verbal prophetic indictment of racism from key players in the dialogue. (Maybe the media is not the best place to look and listen since they major on formulating and selling news stories with their pre-occupation with ratings.) I have honestly tried to listen for minute evidence to structural change within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. I do not believe that I am alone in saying that the verdict remains the same as we look within the movement.[98]

In assessing the significance of the Memphis colloquy, one sees disappointment and hope in the views of Lovett and Robeck respectively. Essentially, both agree on the nature of the Pentecostal problematic of race and racism in the movement's organisational development; and both see the centrality of personal agency in transforming attitudes in the formation of a genuine *de-racialised* Pentecostal ecclesiology. Whether the Memphis 'miracle' of racial reconciliation is seen as 'premature' (Lovett), or as 'a miracle in the making' (Robeck), the imperative of racial reconciliation as the test of true Christian unity in Pentecostalism comes at a price.[99] For Lovett, there is an 'idealist illusion'[100] about racial reconciliation where there is no corresponding 'change in circumstances and structures'; and similarly, where change in 'external circumstances' is not accompanied by 'inner renewal'. The 'proof is in the pudding' becomes the perennial theme for Lovett in the politics of the discourse on race among Pentecostals; and this discourse is significantly informed by Lovett's perceptions and arguments about the

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[98] Ibid., 123.

[99] The notion that the Memphis Manifesto on racial reconciliation would in, and of, itself, bring about racial unity, would be akin to Bonhoeffer's notion of 'cheap grace' or Robert Beckford's view on 'weak reconciliation'. Bonhoeffer says: 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession.' (See his The Cost of Discipleship, London, SCM Press: 1959, p.36)

[100] Lovett, *'Looking Back to Go Forward'*, p.124.

demarcation line between the *inability* and the *unwillingness* of white Pentecostals to deal a 'death blow to racism':

> I am prepared to argue that the White church of North America is not prepared to deal a death blow to institutional racism within and without its ranks...When I say I am disturbed over the future of reconciliation among us, it is for pragmatic reasons. For me the 'proof is in the pudding.' 'A tree is known by the fruit it bears.'[101] The problem is too massive and pervasive to vanish over night.[102]

Racial *reconciliation* and *repentance*, for both Lovett and Robeck, constitute the critical personal and institutional dialect in providing a theology for a deracialised Pentecostal ecclesiology consistent with the Black (Pentecostal) experience of racism and the White (Pentecostal) experience (conscious/unconscious) of being the beneficiaries of the phenomenon of racism. True reconciliation, as argued for Lovett and others, demands both forgiveness and justice. The absence of the latter turns reconciliation into what Beckford calls 'weak reconciliation'. According to Beckford, weak reconciliation makes unequal demand on the victim:

> Weak reconciliation is resolution without justice. It pays no attention to the pass and focuses on the future. Therefore, past injustices are not corrected. Also, weak reconciliation makes no demands from the victimers; instead it is the victim who has to cover most ground by forgiving the most and receiving the least. In contrast, strong reconciliation views justice as an integral component of reconciliation. In addition, strong reconciliation is concerned with past, present and future. This is because it is concerned with redeeming the past in

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[101] This is a reference to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He warns against hypocrisy (or, as the African Heritage Bible terms it, the credibility gap between 'empty rhetoric and substantive action') by use of the classic agricultural metaphor: 'Beware of the false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.' (Matthew 7:15-20 KJV)

[102] Lovett, '*Looking Back to Go Forward*', p.124.

> order to secure peace and justice today. Strong reconciliation is hard to find...[103]

Repentance and the concern for social and 'distributive' justice, therefore, is the pre-condition for racial *reconciliation* in Pentecostalism in Lovett's theo-political discourse:

> I am ill prepared to make a call for racial reconciliation between Black/White Pentecostals until such a call is preceded by repentance, a call for remedial and distributive justice, and authentic reconciliation between people of colour all over the globe. We long for the day when we will lay aside our warring allegiances, our racial divisions, our gender divisions, our double standards, all in light of, and under the judgment of, the Kingdom that knows no end, as we seek the shalom of God. The journey must begin in a radical way within each of us, and hopefully this will be the beginning of a new future for all of us.[104]

The added dimension of '*conversion*', and the role of the Nation of Islam (NOI) in the Black community, informs Robeck's conclusion on the politics of race in Pentecostalism. Robeck views the NOI in positive terms, arguing that their unity, and their mediation of pride and self-esteem to young Black men[105], 'may, in fact, be a judgment upon the racially divided church, which the church must now endure or overcome.'[106] Acts of repentance, confession, and conversion are central in restoring 'the mandate of the Great

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[103] Robert Beckford, God of the Rahtid: Redeeming Rage, London, Darton, Longman and Todd: 2001, p.46.

[104] Lovett, 'The Present: The Problem of Racism in the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement' in *Pentecostal Partners*, p.18.

[105] At the 1996 *Unity of the Spirit* Conference in Cleveland, Tennessee, Dr Ridley Usherwood, former Principal of the New Testament Church of God Bible College in Northampton, spoke of his son's participation in the preparation of the Million Man March in the US. For Usherwood, the participation of his son in this quasi-political activity was a means of developing 'Black consciousness and social responsibility outside the narrow confines of the church.'

[106] Robeck, 'The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism' in *Pentecostal Partners*, p.67.

Commission'— a message rooted in reconciliation that has been 'contaminated' by the treatment of African-Americans by White Pentecostals.[107]

For Robeck, there is a requirement in the Pentecostal discourse on race, and the genuine search for a de-racialised Pentecostal ecclesiology, to transcend mere identification and *admission* of prejudice and racism to a place where the confession and rhetoric of racial reconciliation 'are consistent with the words of confession':

> Pentecostals as a whole must identify and admit to those acts of prejudice, discrimination, and/or racism of which they are guilty before forgiveness can be given. It will require soul searching, honesty, and a willingness to change regardless of their fears. It does not come when a single well-intended person asks forgiveness on behalf of all others of the same race without their knowledge and approval. The confession must be owned by those who say, 'Amen.' Once the confession is made, *attitudes and actions require dramatic changes* which are consistent with the words of confession. Nothing less than repentance and conversion are acceptable. As a result, Pentecostals will need to be challenged to think in new, inclusive ways when addressing 'the other.'[108]

4.7 Pentecostal Spirituality and Social Equality—Kairos Deferred and Lamar Vest's Reconciliation Rhetoric

The maintenance of the matrix of Black-White construct of social and organisational encounter in the Church of God, Cleveland, has not significantly developed beyond the power relations and cultural hegemony of the society in which modern Pentecostalism first took root. In many respects, as argued above, the opportunity to utilize the unifying, and spiritually

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[107] Ibid., p.66.
[108] Ibid., p.64.

equalising, pneumatological experience of glossolalia as an instrument in the transformation in the secular sphere was lost in white Pentecostal's accommodation to the exigencies of the prevailing racial mores of American society. This *new* century pneumatological opportunity – the *kairos* of the Spirit – eluded the Pentecostal movement[109] soon after its inception and later on during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement, the 1950s and 1960s.[110]

In not supporting the Civil Rights Movement another Pentecostal *kairos* for racial reconciliation and social transformation was lost. The Church of God, as one of the largest Pentecostal organisations in North America, vicariously shares this Pentecostal history and legacy. The Pentecostal historian Vinson Synon referred to this *kairos* as the loss of 'a golden opportunity' to impact the legacy of the perennial American Dilemma:

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[109] See Vinson Synon, 'The Future: A Strategy for Reconciliation', in *Pentecostal Partners*. Synon reminded Pentecostals that they are heirs to a tradition of 'Spirit-filled social reform' in the struggle for justice: 'One of our lesser known strengths is the fact that we Pentecostals are heirs to a great and authentic tradition of Spirit-filled social reform that has made major advances in the struggle for justice and righteousness in this present world. This tradition ranges from John Wesley's struggle against slavery, to the abolitionist movements before the Civil War, to the work of the Salvation Army in our day'. (p.11) See also Ernest Marshall Howse, Saints in Politics: the 'Clapham Sect' and the growth of Freedom, London, George Allen & Unwin: 1953.

[110] See Charles W. Conn, op. cit.,; Joseph C. Hough Jr., Black Power and White Protestants: A Christian Response to the New Negro Pluralism, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press: 1968. Although the Church of God did not support the Civil Rights Movement, there was strong support from the Oneness Apostolic organisations. Indeed, one eyewitness account indicates that Elder Eddie Robert Driver, Sr., of the Church of God in Christ was so blunt in his advocacy of civil rights that white people began to leave the church: 'He stood up and said a lot of civil rights things about white people, much like the Black Power people say today...! "A white man don't mind if you marry his daughter, but he don't me to marry his wife's daughter!" And after a while it began to dawn on the whites what he was saying, and he drove them away. People began to leave there.' See Bishop Ithiel C. Clemmons, Bishop C.H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ, Bakersfield, California, Pneuma Life Publishing (Centennial Edition):1996, p.98.

By not supporting the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, many Pentecostals missed a golden opportunity to contribute our gifts to solving the nation's vexing problem of racial discrimination. As sad as that may be, there is nothing we can do to change the past. We must now look resolutely toward the future. There is much yet to be done because Satan, as we know, will increasingly attempt to destroy all he can do before the return of the Lord.[111]

Consequently, the Church of God remained essentially a southern (American) phenomenon, reflecting the *sitz im leben* of the South, its psychology and political culture.

The portrait of the Church of God presented by Mickey Crews is the one that most Black ministers at the 1996 Cleveland '*Unity of the Spirit*' conference would have been painfully[112]aware of:

> Like most southerners, Church of God ministers viewed the black man and his role in society through paternalistic eyes. They accepted discrimination and segregation of the races as a way of life — one that they believed had worked rather well. Many Church of God clergymen believe that the races should remain segregated in order to retain racial purity. They argue that God had created different races and commanded that they remain separate. Presenting the same arguments that their fellow white southerns used, Church of God ministers argue that blacks were descendants of Ham, the accursed son of Noah. Clergymen encouraged all blacks to be content with segregation and with their place in society. A few adamant preachers claimed that no organisation, law officer, American president, or Supreme Court would ever remake society. Disclaiming any racial prejudice, T.L. Lowery, a prominent Church of God evangelist who later held the office of assistant general overseer, warned: '*When man tries to overstep the purposes of God and break down the barrier between the races, he only brings trouble, discord, confusion, malice, and murder.*'[113] (Author's emphasis)

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[111] Synon, 'The Future: A Strategy for Reconciliation' in *Pentecostal Partners*, p.11.
[112] At the conference Dr Wallace J. Sibley was moved to tears as he spoke about his experience in the Church of God and how, as the newly appointed Regional Evangelism Director of the south-eastern states Black congregations, he was not allowed to have an office in the Church of God HQ in Cleveland, Tennessee.
[113] Mickey Crews, The Church of God: A Social History, Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, p.164. See also Gerloff, op. cit., pp.93-112.

'*Unity of the Spirit*' was an *intra-Pentecostal* attempt by the Church of God to continue the inter-Pentecostal reconciliation dialogue of Memphis. Although Lamar Vest, General Overseer of the Church of God was among the key respondent to Robeck's Memphis paper, he did not attend the '*Unity of the Spirit*' Conference.[114] The political tensions that surrounded the planning and organisation of this conference, and the inevitable organisational unease that would be disclosed as critical attention were been focused on *race and power* in the Church of God, may partially explain the absence of Dr Vest.

At Memphis, Vest's response was conditioned and informed by a number of moral values and commitments, illustrating his understanding and awareness of many of the historic problems of race relations in Pentecostal ecclesiology and the 'serious malady in the body of Christ' spoken of by Amos. Firstly, there was the acknowledgment that although 'White racism and white dominance are not exclusively Pentecostal issues', racism and 'white domination' had, unquestionably, taken a severe toll on the movement and on its 'present-day credibility.'[115] Secondly, there was a willingness, argued Vest, to take 'a probing and incisive look at the historical roots of this condition and, hopefully, to repent and take necessary corrective

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[114] Undoubtedly, there were political tensions around the *Unity of the Spirit* Conference in 1996. The conference, held at the Church of God prestigious Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee, was officially sponsored by the Black Minister's Association of the Church of God. Along with Lamar Vest, the newly appointed Evangelism Director with responsibility for Black Ministries, George Jackson, were also conspicuous by their absence.

[115] Lamar Vest, 'Response to a paper presented by Dr. Cecil Robeck', in Pentecostal Partners, p.2.

measures.'[116] Thirdly, Vest outlined eight 'areas of common concern' and seven 'poignant questions for which I personally desire more information.'

In light of the *Unity of the Spirit* conference and its attendant political tensions, on the one hand, and Lamar Vest's dominant role at Memphis and in the Church of God, on the other hand, it is important to highlight the poignant questions on which he sought further information, and what he perceived to be 'areas of common concern' for Pentecostals. These are as follows:

A. *Areas of common Concern:*

1. Pentecostals have not faithfully fulfilled the original vision of racial unity.
2. Tragically, racism has not yet peaked in our society and it not only threatens what God intended for the Pentecostal Movement, but for the future of America as well.
3. The definite lack of opportunity for participation of non-whites in Pentecostal and Evangelical leadership must be addressed.[117]
4. Whites do not always recognize their own prejudices or how their actions are viewed by African-American brothers and sisters.
5. Racism goes beyond prejudice and discrimination. Racism is a power issue. At its foundation, it is the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others.

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[116] Ibid.

[117] The appointment of Bishop Joel Edwards (former Senior Pastor of Mile End New Testament Church of God) as leader of the Evangelical Alliance, UK, is a significant breakthrough in Evangelical leadership. This is the first time since the founding of the EA in 1846. That a Black person has led the Alliance, reflecting the evolving maturity of both British evangelicalism and the Pentecostal tradition out of which Edwards has emerged. Notwithstanding Edwards' gifts as teacher, preacher and charismatic personality (and his theological training at the conservative London Bible College), his appointment to lead British Evangelicals is partly due to the historical fact, as Bebbington argued, that upward 'social mobility among the Pentecostalists also made their acceptance into the Evangelical fold smoother during the 1960s and 1970s.' See D.W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s, London, Unwin Hyman: 1989. The rise of Joel Edwards to lead the Evangelical Alliance in the UK, as well as becoming an Honorary Canon of St Paul's Cathedral in 2001 is, as Randall and Hilborn argue, 'a striking move for a Pentecostal' (Ian Randall and David Hilborn, One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance, Reading, Paternoster Press:2001, p.355.

6. Treatment of African American Pentecostals by white Pentecostals has fallen far below the level of a loving relationship required by Holy Scripture.
7. What is really at stake is more than our working together. What is at stake is the very unity of the body of Christ formed by the Holy Spirit. We either reconcile or we die
8. We must repent for our sins of prejudice, discrimination and racism before God will restore us to our original purpose.

B. *Poignant questions requiring further information:*

1. When did Pentecost begin accepting individualism and privatism as opposed to being the people of God?
2. What are the influences and consequences of fundamentalism on the Pentecostal Movement?
3. How many Pentecostals, blacks and whites, were involved in Civil Rights Movement and how many are personally involved in a continuing effort to bring about racial equality in our society?
4. To what extent has the Pentecostal Movement done any better, or worse, in race relations than the larger evangelical community?
5. When do we start making clear statements to the world regarding our position? What do we say and to whom do we say it?
6. What are the social movements which have grown out of the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements?
7. What happened at the founding of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America[118] regarding race relations? Were blacks included? If not, why not?

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[118] This is a very interesting question, given Church of God membership of the PFNA and its Trinitarian doctrinal basis of affiliation. The Trinitarian doctrinal formula functions as a mechanism of exclusion for most Black Pentecostal organisations, and a few white ones, who officially subscribe to the 'Oneness' doctrine. 'Oneness Pentecostalism' emerged as a religious movement within the Assemblies of God in 1914. However, its roots go back the Black Pentecostal leader G.T. Haywood, Andrew Urshan, R.E. McAlister and others. Essentially, 'Oneness' Pentecostalism or 'Apostolic' Pentecostalism challenges the traditional Trinitarian doctrine and baptismal practice with a 'modalistic view of God, a revelational theory of the name of Jesus, and an insistence on rebaptism *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.'*(See D.A. Reed, 'Oneness Pentecostalism' in Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (ed), DPCM, pp.644-651.) These 'Oneness' groups are usually referred to as 'Jesus Only' or 'Jesus name' Pentecostals. Howard A. Goss, the 'Oneness' Pentecostal leader of the United Pentecostal Church, represented his organisation at the second exploratory meeting in Chicago prior to the establishment of the PFNA. However, his organisation became ineligible for membership of the PFNA as soon as its Trinitarian doctrinal statement was adopted. The Trinitarian formula was reiterated in the Draft Constitution and By-Laws for the new Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA): Article III Statement of Faith: '2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' Prior to the PFNA being formally organised in October 1948, a committee of four were appointed to draw up the articles of the fellowship. H.L. Chesser of the Church of the Church of God was one of the four. The other three committee members were J. Roswell Flower (Assemblies of God), E.J. Fulton (Open Bible Standard Churches)

The historic nature of the 'Memphis miracle' in *inter*-Pentecostal race relations appeared to be the prevailing motivation behind the Black Minister's Association sponsored '*Unity of the Spirit*' *intra*-Pentecostal conference in Cleveland.

In the 'spirit of Memphis', the continuing dialogue engendered by the 'Black section' of the Church of God could be seen as a programmatic attempt in the realisation of Vest's commitment at Memphis to take 'necessary corrective measures[119]' subsequent to personal and organisational repentance. Apocalyptically, Vest declared at Memphis: 'Pentecostal (racial) reconciliation must come quickly or, I believe, our lack of unity will be exposed to the world...We either reconcile or we die.'[120] With the articulation of such urgency by the General Overseer of the Church of God, the

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and Herman D. Mitzner (International Church of the Four Square Gospel). The objectives adopted in 1948 as follows:

1. To provide a vehicle of expression and coordination of efforts in matters common to all member bodies, including missionary and evangelistic effort throughout the world.
2. To demonstrate to the world the essential unity of *Spirit-baptized believers*, fulfilling the prayer of the Lord Jesus 'that they all may be one (John 17:21).
3. To provide services to its constituents which will enable them to accomplish more quickly and efficiently their responsibility for the speedy evangelization of the world.
4. To encourage the principles of comity for the nature of the body of Christ, endeavouring to keep the *Unity of the Spirit* until we all come to the unity of the faith.

Robeck provides some answers as to why Blacks were not included in the establishing of the PFNA, or did not seek membership decades after its founding. These are partly to do with the prevailing views of white Pentecostals to segregation and the southern-based Pentecostal denominations. 'It is highly unlikely', argues Robeck, 'that the PFNA would reflect a position which was different from that taken by many of its constituent member churches.' The Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Convention (1958) of the PFNA indicates that a Church of God in Christ (Black Pentecostal) representative made inquiries 'concerning possible membership of his group with the PFNA', but nothing became of it, or is known about any subsequent Black applications for membership to this exclusively White Pentecostal fellowship. (See Roswith Gerloff, A Plea For British Black Theologies for a detailed treatment of the Pentecostal 'Oneness' movements and their derivates in Britain. Table V (p.236) traces this historical development from 1956-1983.)

[119] Lamar Vest, op. cit., p.2.

[120] Ibid., pp.3-4.

organisational tensions surrounding the *Unity of the Spirit* conference can be seen as another *kairos* of the Spirit that was missed for racial reconciliation. In this case it was a lost opportunity for *intra*-Pentecostal dialogue on the 'American Dilemma' that had correspondingly become a Pentecostal dilemma, disclosing the historic racialization of power and control and Black struggles in the Church of God for equality in leadership as we shall examine in the next chapter. Notwithstanding the significance of Memphis, the inability of Black ministers in the Church of God to capitalise upon its mood in 1996 was seen as a political failure by Edwards:

> Memphis 1994 was a significant point at which Pentecostals admitted racism existed. The Black Minister's Conference, 1996, failed to capitalise on the mood and demonstrated the political inadequacies of the Black leaders forum.[121]

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[121] Bishop Joel Edwards, Response to Question 4 of Questionnaire on 'Race and Leadership in Pentecostalism', Dec 2002. The UK Church of God perspective on race and reconciliation came from Bishop Joel Edwards. As a researcher I had the privilege of accompanying Bishop Edwards to the *Unity of the Spirit* Conference. I was particularly struck by the efforts of Dr G. Dennis McGuire, member of the Church of God Executive Council, to track down Joel Edwards to ascertain the subject matter of his conference text and its political and polity import. One suspects that one of the main reasons for Dr McGuire's persistence was to get Edwards to tone down his known opposition to the Anglo-American domination of the Church of God. Discussions with Edwards, and subsequent meetings with key Church of God personnel indicated the political tensions in the organisation with the *Unity of the Spirit* conference. Dr. Cecil Knight, President of Lee College, opened the conference with the traditional greetings. The politics and sentiments expressed in his peroration not only indicated the organisational uneasiness with the theme of the conference, but also the desire to accentuate the *spiritual* priority of Paul's injunction to 'keep the unity of the Spirit' (Ephesians 4:3) without too much attention being focused on the *justice* issues of power relations in the Church of God, or on the 'disillusionment' Jackson spoke about 'which is being experienced by blacks in this denomination, especially as a result of the exclusion of blacks from important, decision-making positions.'(See Joseph E. Jackson, Reclaiming Our Heritage: The Search for Black History in the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, Church of God Black Ministries:1993, p.45) The 'political inadequacies' of the Black leaders spoken of by Edwards became evident in the strategic debate about Black representation on the Council of Eighteen. African American leaders were suggesting that two Black members be proposed to the Council; Edwards argued for strategically proposing more than two in the event that no less than two would be deemed politically pragmatic. This debate was taking place in the same year that around a million Black Pentecostals from Zaire were officially joining the Church of God.

Chapter Five - A Tale of Two Churches

5.0 Prolegomena to Power-Sharing— Church of God Black Ministers' Struggle for Intra-Pentecostal Dialogue

In the last chapter, I focused on Memphis and the *inter*-Pentecostal discourse on racism and racial reconciliation. In this chapter, I want to focus on the *intra*-Pentecostal attempt (Church of God *Unity of the Spirit* conference, 1996) by Church of God Black ministers to build upon the 'spirit of Memphis' to advocate for a change in the structure of power and representation in light of the Church's rhetoric and resolution on internationalization and racism.

The portrayal of organisational tension in the Church of God was felt prior to the conference; and this tension was seen in the organisation of the event and in the absence of a number of key personnel. In spite of the rhetoric of the leader of the Church of God at Memphis, there was not widespread support from the church's hierarchy for this initiative from the Black Minister's Association. Indeed, questions about the legality of the conference (i.e., the conference being 'outside the system') appeared to inform the Black minister's perception of organisational disquiet on the part of white ministers. Dr Samuel G. Ellis, President of the Black Minister's Association, publicly raised the issue in a diplomatic manner:

> Many have said because this meeting is being requested by blacks it is illegal and outside the system. What is illegal about coming together and discussing the topics of racism and reconciliation? Is it not valid for Church of God members, no matter the color, to come together and say, I'm sorry or forgive me? No matter who calls it, and when it is

called, if it is calling for wrongs to be made right and that a spirit of unity may prevail, then what is illegal about that? Then tell us the system to address the issue of racism. But if I have done wrong, I request of my leaders to forgive me and I also request the Executive Committee[1] to call the Church of God together, the Whites, African Americans, Jamaicans, Haitians, Hispanics, Romanians, Indian Americans, whatever the race and ethnic background may be, let us come together and discuss such issues as racism and reconciliation. Then there will be a Solemn Assembly. Let us redefine our objectives and restructure ourselves if necessary or bring about people awareness that will bring equality of leadership in the Church where a person will be elected to the highest office in the church, not because of the colour of his skin, but because he is ordained and qualified...our International, National, State and local leadership positions should reflect a multicultural church.[2]

'*Unity of the Spirit*' was, undoubtedly, an attempt to continue the *inter*-Pentecostal dialogue on racism *intra*-pentecostally. In the context of the political tension surrounding the Cleveland conference and the 'well-intended' sentiments of Lamar Vest at Memphis, Amos'[3] views took on an immediate poignancy, reflecting the degree to which radical change in a religious organisation is not only about the rhetoric (or charisma) and expressed commitment of the leader, but it is also about political commitment and institutional communication of a corporate shift in the organisational culture, reinforced with public opportunities for organisational learning.

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[1] The (all white) Executive Committee comprised of the following: Paul L. Walker (General Overseer), R. Lamar Vest (First Assistant General Overseer), G. Dennis McGuire (Second Assistant General Overseer), T.L. Lowery (Third Assistant General Overseer), and Bill F. Sheeks (General Secretary-Treasurer).

[2] Samuel G. Ellis, 'Response and Summary to Dr Leonard Lovett 'Looking Backward to Go Forward', *Unity of the Spirit* Conference, March 27-29,1996, Lee College, Cleveland, Tennessee.

[3] Amos stated: 'Well-intended leaders who repent on behalf of their churches and denominations in meetings such as the Racial Reconciliation Dialogue in Memphis must seize the opportunities given to convey these sentiments to the congregations over which they preside.' (See 'Race, Gender, and Justice' in *PNEUMA*, Vol. 18, Number 1, Spring 1996, p.134)

The Cleveland papers from *Unity of the Spirit* were not primarily concerned with providing a theological exploration of racism in the Church of God. They were, as we shall see below, predominantly concerned with making explicit how racism in Church of God history and ecclesiology had disenfranchised its black constituents by the construction, development and maintenance of white hegemony in leadership. There was an essentialist argument, a modest and moderate call, for power-sharing in the Church of God. On the penultimate day of the three-day conference, the expression of the call for power-sharing was crystallised in the form of a conservative petition document delivered to the Executive Council of the Church of God. The language and political import of the petition are significant, characteristically deferential. The final paper, delivered by Quan Miller, was a brief biblical exposition of Galatians 2:11-14 and 4:28-29 and an exhortation to pursue the reality of the conference theme—'unity of the Spirit'.

Analytically, the themes and emphasis of the six main papers and responses linked historical practices in the Church of God to practical challenges and commitment to change. Although the papers do not lend themselves to neat categorisation, there is a thematic coherence in the construction and nuance of the arguments and exhortation towards institutional change in Church of God polity and politics. For conceptual clarity the Cleveland papers will be divided into two categories, socio-

political and ethico-cultural respectively. Papers in the first category[4] look at institutional practice and the racial legacy, culminating in the petition to the Executive Committee for power-sharing and equity in the Church of God; papers in the second category[5] are much more concerned with ethics, unity, identity and representation in a church that espouses the rhetoric of *internationalization*.

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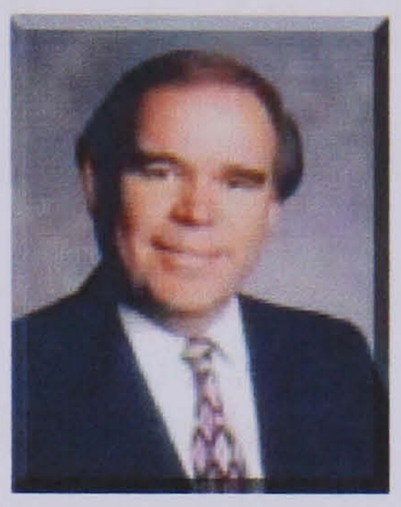
4 These are the papers of Leonard Lovett, 'Looking Backward to Go Forward: The Proof is in the Pudding'; Wallace Sibley, 'Black Heritage of the Church of God'; and Oliver Haney, 'The Memphis Miracle.'

5 The following papers fit into this category: Joel Edwards, 'The England Happening'; Martin Mutyebele, 'The Zaire Connection'; Nathaniel Spease, Jr., 'Evangelizing Urban America'; and the final conference paper by Quan Miller, 'Unity of the Spirit'.

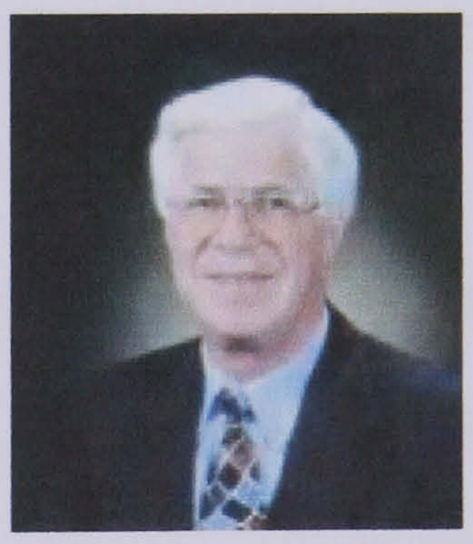
International Executive of the Church of God - 2000

Dr. R. Lamar Vest
General Overseer



Dr. G. Dennis McGuire
First Assistant General Overseer

Dr. T.L. Lowery
Second Assistant General Overseer



Dr.Bill F.Sheeks
Third Assistant General Overseer

Dr. Gene D. Rice
Secretary General

5.1 'Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil'— Radical 'Outsider' Vivisection and Black Rehabilitation in Church of God Historiography

The opening paper by Leonard Lovett of the Church of God in Christ entitled 'Looking Backward in order to go Forward' set the mood of the conference, contextualising the *raison d'être* of the *inter*-Pentecostal Memphis colloquy and raising questions about the role of Black people in Church of God historiography. The choice of Lovett to initiate the conference dialogue on racism and racial reconciliation in the Church of God was significant. The choice was clearly politically informed.[6] This is, of course, not to suggest that Lovett was in anyway unqualified[7] for the task, rather it further underlines the delicacy and the fragility of *intra*-Pentecostal 'unity' in matters of race in Church of God polity.

The history of this delicacy and fragility, as institutionalized in the *Coloured Work* of the Church of God, was a key aspect of Sibley's paper. Furthermore, choosing Lovett's paper to set the scene for the conference functioned on both a cognitive level and on a political level. Cognitively, it conditions and informs the discourse by arguing that substantive matters of equality in Church of God polity and Black representation cannot be properly

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6 The criticism of the political failure of the Black Minister's Association by Edwards is, to some extent, attenuated by the choice of Lovett and his role at the Unity of the Spirit conference.

7 Lovett is an expert on Holiness-Pentecostal history and a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement and a friend of Martin Luther King. Like King, Lovett graduated with distinction from the famous Morehouse College, going on to Crozer Theological Seminary. His doctorate, from Emory University's Candler Graduate School of Theology, on Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is seen as a unique contribution to Afri-centric religious studies. Lovett pioneered the first fully accredited Pentecostal Seminary in North America, the C.H. Mason Theological Seminary, an affiliate of the Interdenominational Theological Centre in Atlanta.

understood without reference to its history of racism and the racial distribution of power and prestige in the church. Politically, it removes Black Church of God key personnel from the psychological 'front line' of any possible institutional backlash from the Cleveland oligarchs.[8]

Strategically, there is an element of political surrogacy in this dual function: it allows Lovett, the 'radical' outsider,[9] to articulate the pain of the 'insiders' without having individual responsibility for institutional change or living with the aftermath. By not being an *intra*-Pentecostal stakeholder — a 'Church of God man' — Lovett's radical discourse on racism and disenfranchisement can be used as a powerful public resource for change in the hands of an ecclesiastically astute Black leadership. The dual function also has merits in *positioning* the 'radical' voices for equity and multiracial leadership in the Church of God nearer the *progressive* end of the continuum of Black Church of God political consciousness, rather than demonising them or locating them on the ultra-radical wing of the spectrum. In short, the voice of a 'radical' outsider often functions to goad institutional oligarchs to make gradual adjustments to internal power relations, while at the same time legitimising and justifying the arguments and the 'politics' of the 'insiders' for change.

Notwithstanding Lovett's qualifications and his key role at Memphis, an *intra*-Pentecostal person could have functioned in the same capacity. The critical content of Lovett's paper could have been delivered by a 'Church of

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8 Here, as elsewhere, the Cleveland oligarchs refer to the Church of God Executive Committee.

9 Lovett is, of course, both an 'outsider' and an 'insider': he is not a minister of the Church of God, but he belongs to the black Pentecostal tradition, the Church of God in Christ.

God man'— the *intra*-Pentecostal Joseph E. Jackson. The first section of Lovett's paper, entitled *'The Proof: Looking Backward at a Divided Household'* briefly charts the history of the Coloured Work of the Church of God and the role of some of its pioneers and their struggle for equality in the church. Much of this history is covered by Jackson in his *Reclaiming Our Heritage: The Search for Black History in the Church of God.* Jackson's work provides a revision of the status of the Black Bahamian couple, the Barrs, in Church of God historical development.

Although this Black couple were the first Church of God missionaries to the Bahamas/Caribbean in the first decade of the twentieth century, the distinction was conferred upon a white couple in Charles Conn's[10] official history of the church. That a Black revisionist version of Church of God historiography was needed in the early 1990s informs Lovett's praise of the rich Black heritage of the Church of God, but it also shows the racial slant of the pen in privileging white contribution to the growth of the church over that of Blacks.

5.2 Institutional Racism in the Church of God and the Phenomenology of Denial

The notion of 'Institutional Racism' in the Church of God, and the theological and political implications of its perceived conceptual dominance in the deliberations of the three days *Unity of the Spirit* conference, may have been

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[10] See Charles Conn, Like A Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God 1886-1976, Cleveland, Tennessee, Pathway Press:1977. Charles Conn was Assistant General Overseer of Church of God between 1962-1966, becoming the General Overseer from 1966-1970.

a major cause of the unease about the event; it may also help to explain why Dennis McGuire of the Executive Council attempted to 'seek out' Revd Joel Edwards from the UK before the official opening session of the conference, and the non-attendance of both Dr Jackson and Dr Lamar Vest. Ellis deals with this issue in his response to Lovett by way of historical and contemporary examples, as well as by intimation and exhortation to all Church of God people to 'find our rightful place in leadership roles.'[11]

There is, for Ellis, another feeling of *kairos* present in the Church of God as to where historical developments have brought the church, and a sense of the 'definite decision' that has to be made, having heard Lovett's 'stirring paper' on 'racism and reconciliation' in Pentecostalism. Of course, there is the recognition by Ellis that at both an *inter*-Pentecostal level, and at an *intra*-Pentecostal level, the issue is not fundamentally new. There is also the collective memory of the institutional punishment of 'one of our most beloved and revered black leaders' whose radical intervention offended the sensibilities of the Church of God hierarchy: during an Assembly meeting he removed 'the rope that divided the coloreds from the whites'.[12]

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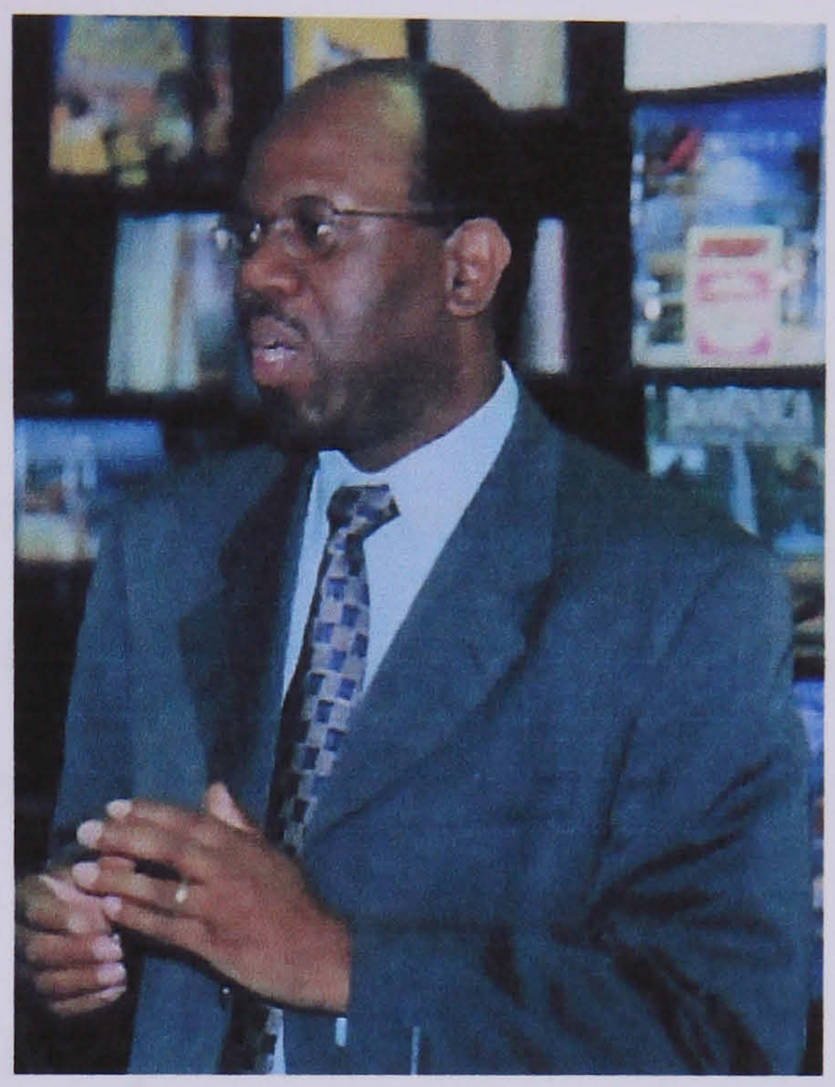
[11] Ellis op. cit., p.4.

[12] A similar prophetic and symbolic act of removing the ropes of racial segregation was performed by the renowned evangelist, Dr Billy Graham, in 1953 during a crusade in Tennessee, the headquarters of the Church of God. Graham recalls: 'In 1953, during our Crusade in Chattanooga, Tennessee, I went into the building as the people were beginning to gather one night and personally tore down the ropes separating the white from the black sections—ropes that had been mandated according to the custom in those days by the local committee. My action caused the head usher to resign in anger right on the spot (and raised some other hackles), but I did not back down.' See Billy Graham, Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham, SanFrancisco, HarperCollins Worldwide: 1997, p.426. Martin Luther King encouraged Graham to persist in his own struggle against racial discrimination by 'preaching the Gospel to integrated audiences and supporting his goals by example— and not by joining him on the streets'. (Ibid.)



Joel Edwards, General Director, Evangelical Alliance.

Joel Edwards was the Senior Pastor of Mile End New Testament Church of God before becoming General Director of the Evangelical Alliance. A graduate of London Bible College, Edwards is one of the country's leading ministers. He was a keynote speaker at the 1996 *Unity of The Spirit* Conference in Cleveland, Tennessee, and he has published a number of books.

In outlining the moral and personal responsibility of black leaders to 'accept or reject' the articulated position of 'Institutional Racism' in the Church of God, Ellis probably knew he was also running the risk of attracting appellations of antinomianism similar to those cast upon the earlier 'rebellious and radical leader' for his symbolic and prophetic action. What Ellis has to say is not only an appeal for the Church of God to understand the *kairos* of the moment and the burden of organisational and personal decision-making; it is also about finding 'a common ground' for equality in ministry and leadership, and avoiding repeating the racial politics and practice of the past:

> The speaker spoke with authority, and articulated the position of Institutional Racism. It is your responsibility to accept or reject what you have heard, but the matter has been placed before you. The issues that face the Church of God today are not new, but now we have arrived at a point in the road to make a *definite decision* whether we are ready and willing to go forward out into the deep of this matter and find a common ground that will bring all people into the hierarchy of church leadership.

> The posture of the church appears as if it is in a stage of denial and refuses to acknowledge that racism existed in the past, is humorous at most. I was told that one of our most beloved and revered black leaders of the past was removed from his leadership of the colored, because at an Assembly (meeting) he removed the rope that divided the coloreds form the whites, he was stripped of his position and branded a rebellious and radical leader not working within the system.

> We must not lower our heads as if these incidents did not happen, for if we refuse to confront and correct the past it is inevitable that we will repeat them in the future. Several articles on the issue of racism have been printed in the *Evangel*[13], but they are vague and far removed from the reality of the church. Our church fathers have never

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13 The *Evangel* is a Church of God Publication.

issued a statement of repentance[14], nor stated that this church practiced segregation prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

A resolution at a General Assembly denouncing racism was passed several years ago, but as we sit, listen and look at the structure of our church, you can visibly see that the system of Institutional Racism is still the order of the day. Many voices, black and white, have risen up to question the church's stance on the issue of racism, but they are quickly silenced by the powers that be.[15]

In the response to Lovett, Ellis does not attempt to theologize[16], theorize or to problematize the notion of race; what he does, however, is accept Lovett's 'phenomenon of racism'[17] and the legitimacy of its application to both *inter and intra*-Pentecostal relations.

Of particular significance in the phenomenon of racism is the 'prophetic indictment of racism in our nation' made by W.E.B. DuBois a century ago; and contemporaneously with the new phenomenon of Pentecostal pneumatology. To some extent, the link between DuBois' 'prophetic indictment' and the birth of modern day Pentecostalism would

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[14] This is an interesting case in point, especially at a time when a number of historic churches and organisations were issuing statements of apology for the legacy of slavery and racism and calling for 'reconciliation'. Ellis later goes on to cite the examples, including the Southern Baptists, Promise Keepers and the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America: 'Reconciliation is the call of the day. Nearly 20,000 Southern Baptists wouldn't have raised their hands and pass a resolution that stated, 'we repent of which we have been guilty and apologize to and ask forgiveness from all African Americans.' Not only was it done, but it was done during the 150th year anniversary (by) a church founded upon slavery. *Promise Keepers*, a National Christian Men's Movement has its members make 'seven promises', including a pledge to reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity. If we are to have unity we must tear down all racial barriers...The Pentecostal Fellowship of North America set the tone for the Church of God of which we are all members; its name change to the PCCNA (Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America) must be more than a name change, the PCCNA Pentecostal Denominations must change their structure and way of doing business.' (p.4)

[15] Ellis, op. cit., pp.1-2.

[16] The need for a Biblical theology of equality in Church of God ministry was stated by Edwards in his critique '*Internationalization and the Church of God*' in respect of the proposal dealing with these matters at the 2002 General Assembly (in Joel Edwards' Private Papers & Correspondence).

[17] Lovett, 'Looking Backward', p.5.

have been made by black ministers at the conference as another case of an eluded *kairos* of the Pentecostal movement — a defining moment of the Spirit for social transformation afforded by the movement's pneumatological endowment and empowerment.

This eluded *kairos*, the moral inability and institutional unwillingness to confute or transcend the phenomenology of racism, allowed DuBois' 'color-line' to shape the development of Pentecostalism, notwithstanding the premature claims of W.J. Seymour, Frank Bartleman and others that the 'colour-line was washed away in the blood' at Azusa Street.[18] DuBois' 'prophetic indictment' in 1903 is a classic statement on racism and political ideology in America and its psychological effects upon black cultural iconography, aesthetics and psychology.[19] In *The Souls of Black Folk* DuBois argued:

> After the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and the Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world — a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world...[20]

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[18] This view was characteristic of the inter-racial paradigm of the first three of years of the Azusa Street Pentecostal mission under the leadership of Seymour. See Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People, pp.152-157; Frank Bartleman, Another Wave Rolls In! (formerly What Really Happened at 'Azusa Street?'), Monroeville, Pa, Whitaker Books:1962, pp.22-56; Iain MacRobert, The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA, pp.53-59; Vinson Synan, The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States, pp.108-111; Ithiel C. Clemmons, Bishop C.H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ, pp.42-56.

[19] See Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness, London/New York, Verso:1993.

[20] W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, New York, Bantam Books: 1989 (originally published in 1903).

In Black Pentecostalism, and especially in the Diaspora, the DuBoisian notion of the peculiar sensation of 'double consciousness' has particular psychological, political, and spiritual resonance and significance. The added dimension of the Biblical faith, with its attendant moral and interpersonal framework and injunctions, make Black people susceptible to a type of *triple consciousness*. Black Pentecostals are not only in the process of reconciling (after much 'overcoming' and historico-spiritual archaeology) their African identity with the experience of 'New World' and Diasporian slavery and oppression, but they are also negotiating the legacy of this experience through their vision of Black Christian identity[21] which neither privileges 'Whiteness' nor 'Euro-centricity' as 'the tape', according to DuBois, for 'measuring one's soul'.

Although the philosophy and phenomenology of racism in the Church of God were not dealt with in any sustained or systematic way at Cleveland in 1996, they were expressed in a number of the papers, discussions and 'corridor politics'. They were certainly not 'passed over in silence' in the Wittgensteinian[22] manner because the phenomenon could be historically and

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[21] See Arthur C. Jones, Wade in the Water: the Wisdom of the Spirituals, Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 1993, pp.1-17; Albert B. Cleage, The Black Messiah, Kansas, Sheed and Ward, Inc.,:1968; Noel Leo Erskine, Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean perspective, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press:1998, (originally published: Maryknoll. NY, Orbis Books:1981; Josiah Ulysses Young lll, A Pan-African Theology: Providence and the Legacies of the Ancestors, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, Inc.: 1992; Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Dover, Mass., The Majority Press:1976; pp.67-8-, 344-358; James Cone, God of the Oppressed, Minneapolis, Minnesota, The Seabury Press:1975; Amy Jacques Garvey, The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, London, Frank Cass & Company Ltd.:967.

[22] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul:1961 (originally published in 1921). Linguistical analysis (logical analysis) as a philosophical tool defines the work of Wittgenstein. He argues, *inter alia*, that the only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity (6.37); the linguistic impossibility of the formulation

politically explained and, of course, 'put into words'. In this respect, the experience of organisational development of the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA) offers important points of comparison in articulating perceived problems and power relations and equality in ministry.

5.3 Learning from Black British Experience—'African' and 'Caribbean' Church Leadership and the Cultural Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Inequality

'Power' relations and struggles for parity and equality in Christian ministry are not only racial; they can also be cultural (cultural hegemony), as alluded to by James S. Tinney and as can be seen in the growth of Black Majority churches and the development of the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA). Tinney argues that 'culturalisms' are often among the significant factors explaining and informing the interaction between Black and White Pentecostals:

> Similarly too, particularly in the inter-racial situations, the imputation of prejudicial motives to the 'other side', often overlooks the degree to which disagreements are due to cultural and class differences, rather than racial hostility. The net effect, of course, is often as injurious to unity as if due to racial animosity...in the meeting of the races within the movement, there also occurred a natural and normal competition between cultural values, and modes of thought and action, each racially identifiable...and each struggling to maintain its own autonomous character. [23]

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of ethical propositions 'Ethics is transcendental' (6.42 and 6.421); and, more controversially, what 'we cannot speak about (i.e., put into words) we must pass over in silence.' (7).

[23] James S. Tinney, 'The Significance of Race in the Rise and Development of the Apostolic Pentecostal Movement', a paper presented to the First Occasional Symposium on Aspects of the Oneness Pentecostal Movement in 1984. Cited in Roswith Gerloff, A Plea For British Black Theologies, pp.99-100.

In 1998, ACEA organised a conference entitled '*We Belong Together*'. The purpose of the conference was to build bridges in the *perceived* divisions and tensions between the 'African' and the 'Caribbean' churches in the UK. The Caribbean hegemony of ACEA in the 1980s and 1990s was reflected in the consecutive appointment as General Secretary of ACEA of three Pentecostals from Caribbean cultural backgrounds. Firstly, there was the appointment of Joel Edwards[24] as General Secretary in 1988, followed by Ronald Nathan[25] and Mark Sturge[26] in 1994 and 1998 respectively.

Differences in *cultures*, ecclesiology, theology, and leadership were explored at this 'cross-cultural' theological conference of black Christian

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[24] Joel Edwards, once described as the kind of leader who can make 'lame ducks believe that they can fly', took over ACEA after the founder and Pioneer, Philip Mohabir, left the office in 1988. Edwards, the progressive conservative, expanded the membership of ACEA and helped to professionalize black church organisation and governance. On 12 December 2002, the Evangelical Alliance (EA) and the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA) convened a meeting with black church leaders and the Charity Commission to discuss governance in the Black-Majority Church arising out of the crisis in two of the largest Black-led churches in the UK. Earlier in the year, the Charity Commission appointed a receiver and manager to take over the administration of Victory Christian Centre (led by Pastor Goodman) and Kingsway International Christian Centre, KICC, (led by Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo). KICC represents *a paradigm shift* in Black Christian development in the UK. With over 11,000 members, KICC does not only signal a religious renaissance in British Charismatic/Pentecostalism development, but it also signals the sociological phenomenon of what can be called the *Nigerianization* of Black Pentecostalism in Britain.

[25] Ronald Nathan's leadership of ACEA was characterised by a degree of radical Afrocentricity. Black political discourse and social empowerment were perennial themes Nathan tried to introduce to Black church discourse. Nathan was influenced by the social and religious thoughts of Marcus Garvey; he later developed what he calls 'a Garveyian ecclesiology' (see his '*A Garveyian Ecclesiology and Black British Churches: With Special Reference to the Church of God Denominations, as Revealed in their Mission and Practices*', M. Th Dissertation, Westminster College, Oxford, 1998).

[26] Mark Sturge, a London Bible College graduate and a minister in the Elim Pentecostal Church, took over ACEA at a time when Caribbean hegemony of the organisation was increasingly under discussion. Indeed, some have argued that the appointment of an 'African' person to lead ACEA would have been timely, reflecting a new paradigm of church growth and the Africanisation (Nigerianisation) of Pentecostalism in Britain. Churches in this Africanisation paradigm would include the International Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), New Covenant Church, Glory Bible Church, and Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC). See R. David Muir, '*A Mighty Long Way': The MV Empire Windrush and the Black Majority Churches in Britain, Fifty Years On*, London, ACEA: 1998.

leaders and theologians. The relevance of 'Black Theology' in light of the social, cultural and educational problems facing society and the black community were analysed; and the themes of reconciliation and meaningful interdenominational dialogue were restated poignantly by Nezlin Sterling of the New Testament Assembly (NTA):

> The BMCs (Black Majority Churches) must become the prophetic voice in a confused, and morally declining society...they must link hands across denominational divide, encourage cross fertilisation of ideas...accept the forgiveness on offer from our white counterparts, move towards forgiveness, release, reconciliation, and meaningful dialogue, in order to forge tangible partnerships and engage in joint community projects and worship.[27]

The extent to which actual and perceived differences between 'African' and 'Caribbean' churches were fracturing the unity of ACEA and becoming socially and politically divisive, led Sterling to ask the imperative question: 'Have we failed our African Christians/Churches?'[28] Although Sterling prefaced her response by recognising both the complexity of the matter, and the fact that the issues raised by the question were not 'straightforward', she admitted to what had become part of the sociology of knowledge on both sides of the so-called African-Caribbean divide in Black Majority Churches. Three key factors informed Sterling's assessment of the perceived divisiveness. Firstly, there was the problem of history, contributing to 'partial' acceptance of African churches that engendered feelings of threat

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[27] See Nezlin J. Sterling, '*We Belong Together*', ACEA, 6 June 1998, We Belong Together Conference.
[28] Ibid., p.8.

and prejudices 'rampant in both groups'.[29] Secondly, there was the admittance that 'cultural biases and differences were not explicitly acknowledged', leading to an 'implicit' demand for 'African Christian cultures to be subsumed or abandoned'.[30] Thirdly, it was argued that 'African Christians were not promoted to key posts within Caribbean churches'. Sterling intimated that this form of 'discrimination' was predicated on a 'fear of them taking over'; it also created 'covert rivalry'.[31] Similar views may, undoubtedly, be held by the Church of God hierarchy in respect of its non-White constituents.

5.4 Shifting the Linguistic Paradigm from Theology to Practice?

There is a seductive tendency for the struggle for racial reconciliation, parity and equality in ministry, along with the realization of 'internationalization' in the Church of God, to get lost in what Buckrham referred to as 'hallelujah conclaves where we meet to engage in emotional hype without any commitment to institutional as well as personal transformation'.[32] Buckrham's sentiments could apply equally to what took place at Memphis in

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29 Ibid. Sterling added that cultural biases led to 'hostility and intolerance to diversity in worship style'.

30 Ibid., p.8. The implicit pressure for African Christian cultures to be abandoned may arise from the fear of syncreticism of traditional African religions with Christianity; or aspects of its survival and retention in African churches on account of what Clarke calls the 'continuing vitality of African religions'. See Peter B. Clarke (ed), New Trends and Developments in African Religions, London, Greenwood Press: 1998. See also Victor Wan-Tatah, 'Pseudo-Conversation and African Independent Churches' in the same volume for a brief treatment of the failures of Christian missionaries in Africa.

31 Sterling, op. cit.

32 Clifton E. Buckrham, Sr, 'Response to a Paper Presented by Dr. Vinson Synan' in *Pentecostal Partners*, p. 4.

1994, Cleveland in 1996 and a host of Church of God General Assemblies where resolutions are adopted and commitments are made.

Between Memphis and Cleveland, on the one hand, and Cleveland and Overstone in the UK, on the other hand, there is a radical triangulation and coherence of black Pentecostal experience and articulation for equality. This triangulated coherence in black Pentecostal experience constitutes a point of departure, challenging and interrogating the *status quo* in the Church of God. Memphis was the watershed in *inter*-Pentecostal relations in that it publicly opened an urgent debate on the historic 'open secret' and 'taboo' of racism in Pentecostalism; the *Unity of the Spirit* conference was a defining moment in the Church of God *cultural* politics and *church* politics[33] in that it provided post-Memphis impetus, and spirit, to challenge racism and communicate dissatisfaction with the structures of inequality in Church of God polity which reinforced and reproduced white hegemony; and the campaign of leaders of the New Testament Church God in Britain to challenge the rhetoric of 'internationalization' of the Church of God in light of authentic Christian witness and the broader struggle against racism and exclusion signalled a new maturity and transition of the New Testament Church.

In the mid 1980s, Brooks identified this new maturity as the quest for greater 'freedom' for the new Testament Church from the American mother church. Although Brooks admitted that the process of seeking more freedom

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[33] See Black Ministers *Petition to Dr Robert White and the Executive Council of the Church of God*, March 28, 1996.

would be a 'delicate matter', he was of the view that this lack of freedom to be innovative and make 'our contribution' was predicated upon negative stereotype of the 'immigrant church' and the 'idea of the emotional West Indian of fifty years ago'. The theme of Brooks' radical agitation for change and equality in the Church of God is restated:

> I think they fall into the misunderstanding that they are still preaching and ministering to a West Indian church. They do not take into account that nearly 40% of the church is indigenous. They are Black English...You are going to have problems if you try to maintain an all American church in a different culture like England's...We need more freedom. I am agitating for an initiative on our part that commands respect...I want other nationalities, other members to see and to recognise that we fellows can manage...I think it's the right and the responsibility of the minister to speak out whether in support of a policy or in criticism of it, or an organisation.[34]

The language of the 'reconciliation strategy' at Memphis, the passion and urgency of black Church of God ministers at the *Unity of the Spirit* conference, and the campaign for the realization of the internationalization of the Church of God among key UK leaders in the church, reveal radical points of departure in the understanding of the key concepts between blacks and whites.

An examination of the language used, and the appropriation and exposition of biblical texts, betray the extent to which cultural/ethnic background and social consciousness informs the language of 'unity' and reconciliation, as well as the parameters for the critique of 'internationalization' in the Church of God. While there are familial affinities

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[34] See Ira Brooks interview in Anita Jackson, Catching Both Sides of the Wind, London, British Council of Churches: 1985, p.13.

in black and white Pentecostal discourse on race, reconciliation and Church of God polity, there are also radical differences. The critical point of departure is not related to the Pauline injunction toward 'unity' and the establishment of a theological norm around the injunction, rather it is based on what can be call the *teleological imperative* — *i.e.*, moving the discourse *beyond* the rhetoric of unity, reconciliation and internationalization to its realization in the design, development and entrenchment of *practices* conducive to, and reflective of, the expressed declarations of ascent to biblical and theological norms.

Black discourse on this teleological imperative is an argument for a paradigm shift from theology to teleology, from doctrine to development, from ideals to institutional change, and from carefully crafted resolutions to their realization in practice and the lived experience of individuals. It is the move away from the cultural hegemony of the 'perennial whiteness'[35] Brooks speaks of, as well as Edwards' argument for 'a contemporary missiology' and a 'god-honouring' ecclesiology in the Church of God that challenges the current 'anachronistic' one.[36]

The interpretation of terms such as 'reconciliation', 'unity' and 'internationalization' in the Church of God have theological, political, and practical implications. The historical and cultural experience of the diverse communities which constitute the international 'communion of saints' will,

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35 See Ira Brooks, 'Where Do We Go From Here?'

36 Joel Edwards, 'Internationalization and the Church of God', 2002, in Joel Edwards Private Papers, p. 1. This paper is a response to the proposal for a motion to Church of God General Assembly, 2002, on internationalization. Edwards develops his critique of the notion of 'internationalization' and the radical 'need to change the constitution' to reflect the reality of the international profile of Church of God membership.

undoubtedly, inform the linguistic appropriation in Church of God lexicography. Brooks raised the issue of language and power and the critical importance of language in the *black-white* discourse between Pentecostals when he argued for an interrogation of the 'language of black and white', its symbolic significance and the way this 'affects peoples' attitudes to each other'.[37] Similar problems of language in the discourse for equality are echoed in Edwards and Solivan, especially in the former's critique of the proposed *motion* on 'Internationalization' in the Church of God passed nearly two decades ago.

In the continuing struggle for equality and representation on the Church of God's strategic Council of Eighteen[38], Black ministers submitted a motion to the Executive Council, accompanied by a letter explaining the rationale for the motion. Trevor Grizzle was the leading protagonist behind the proposal. The tone of the Black ministers' Motion of 2000, like the *Petition* drafted during the '*Unity of the Spirit* conference in 1996, is markedly restrained and pragmatically *deferential*. Addressed to Dr Robert White and the Executive Council of the Church of God, the *Petition* made reference to the historic marginalization of 'people of colour' in the church and appealed to the Executive to rise to the challenge to heal divisions, tackle racism and prevent an exodus of Black people from the organisation:

> For a number of years we have heard our brother and sisters of colour

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37 Ira Brooks, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', pp. 75-76. The 'balanced theology' Brooks was advocating was a precursor to Erskine's '*decolonizing*' of theology. (See Noel Erskine, Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective, Trenton, N.J. and Asmara, Africa World Press: 1998 (originally published in 1981 by Orbis Books).

38 Constitutionally, the Council of Eighteen is the second most powerful decision-making body after the International Executive Council.

attempting to be heard at all levels of the church. We feel compelled to say that we have a moral, ethical and spiritual obligation to stop and listen. According to Ephesians 4, we are all members of the same body. When they are hurting, we are hurting. However, it seems that their pleas have fallen upon deaf ears...Brothers, we are more divided than we think. There is a great deal of unrest among people of color in our church. We fear that we are about to lose many of our most sincere and dedicated brothers and sisters. Please, let us rise to the challenge to prevent an exodus of people that we need and love. This issue will not go away. We believe two courses of action will render a healing to our denomination.

First, we appeal to you as the Executive Council of the Church of God to call a solemn assembly at the 1996 General Assembly to bring these statements to the church at large and offer a time of confession and repentance. Second, please take immediate steps to appoint people of color to vital positions of leadership in the Church of God. This would include executive as well as administrative positions. Such actions demonstrate our determination to do what is right. Parity is of utmost importance to an international denomination. As America's oldest Pentecostal Church, we have already led the way in issuing the Resolution on Racism prior to the Memphis Miracle. The Church of God must now demonstrate that we will not tolerate social injustice or racism in any form.

> We the undersigned respectfully submit this document to the Executive Council of the Church of God for your kind consideration. [39]

The proposed Motion of 2000, like the 1996 *Petition above*, represents an important moment in the history of Black struggles for equality in the Church of God. Its importance lie, as will be shown in the full text below, not only in its disclosure of the extent to which the *cultural politics* of race continues to inform Church of God polity, but also illustrates the perpetuation of a hegemonic Anglo-American culture. In short, the Motion was an attempt to, partially, realize the ethics and spirit of the

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[39] 28 March, 1996, *Black Ministers' Petition To the Reverend Dr. Robert White and the Executive Council of the Church of God.*

resolution on *Internationalization* to spiritually and politically oppose 'national, regional or sectional image'.

In seven main paragraphs, biblical and extra-biblical reasons are advanced by Black ministers as to why the *politics* of 'inclusion' should be part of the equality agenda in Church of God polity in fulfilment of the *Internationalization* rhetoric. Although the motion was not passed, it stands as another historical defining moment— an *intra*-Pentecostal *Kairos* deferred— in transforming Church of God polity toward cultural and 'sectional' equality. The arguments for equality are expressed biblically, sociologically, and theologically. Use is made of the Pauline notion of radical unity through incorporation into the 'body of Christ' by baptism, leading to the *raison d'être* of the black struggles in the Church of God to address cultural and 'sectional' hegemony in organisational polity:

> All God's children are equal and equally important to him. The Church of God is a family, where all members should have equal rights and privileges.[40]

The letter to the Executive Council setting out the proposal for equality and black representation, as well as 'the motion in amendment of the By-law S.4' of the Executive Council, are quoted in full below:

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40 Letter to the International Executive Council, Church of God, 18 August, 2000. The emphasis in bold are in the original documents.

August 18, 2000

The International Executive Council
Church of God
2490 Keith Street
P.O. Box 2430
Cleveland, TN 37320-2430

Dear Sirs:

1. This correspondence is to give some rationale for the motion we have submitted to you, that a quota system be adopted whereby ***at least two non-Anglos, at least one Black and at least one Hispanic***, be assured a place on the Council of Eighteen at each International General Assembly. The granting of such privileged member status is not without precedent; it is in fact a standing policy in the Church of God that, without the General Council having to vote, South Africa and Indonesia are guaranteed automatic representation on that Council. Adopting a similar policy for Black and Hispanic inclusion is necessary because the present structure of the Church's polity and method of election render it nearly impossible for non-Anglo representation in the higher echelons of leadership in our Church.

2. The request is not unreasonable, but is right and fair from several standpoints. First, it has biblical support. Paul reminds the Church that **'There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all'** (Eph. 4:4-6, NIV). All God's children are equal and equally important to him. The Church of God is a family, where all members should have equal rights and privileges.

3. When the Hebrew minority was exercising a monocultural monopoly over the church and micromanaging its affairs, there came an outcry from the Hellenist Jews, whom they regarded as second-class citizens. Far from thinking that the Hellenists were unspiritual in asking for justice and a stake in the leadership of their own affairs, Peter saw both the rightness of the Hellenists' cause and the potential danger the problem posed for the church. Organizational adjustment was the only way forward. **'Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom,'** said the apostles. **'We will**

turn this responsibility over to them.' (Acts 6:3, 4).

4. Second, for many years the Church of God has made the internationalization of the Church one of its primary goals. This is a noble idea, but will remain just that — a noble idea — until other countries and ethnic groups are actually involved in its leadership at the highest levels. Multiculturalism is a concept we have rightly adopted and promote as a Church, but until it is reflected in the leadership, the Church of God will not be able to defend itself against the charge of being an American Church with an international membership. From around the world the unified voices of the non-represented that have long been ignored are growing, calling attention to their plight. Our Church can no longer afford to pay a deaf ear to their plea.

5. Third, we can take a cue from the corporate world, where every effort is being made to represent ethnic minorities in upper-level leadership and management positions. This is true from the White House to Wall Street, Madison Avenue to Hollywood, the military to the major leagues. Should we feel happy for doing less as the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led Body of Christ? In doing so do we not stand justly indicted by the 'unjust' of this world? Can our Church bear prophetic witness to and be an uncompromised and authoritative voice in the twenty-first century and the new millennium when more than two-thirds of its membership have no voice?

6. Fourth, Blacks and Hispanics are the two largest minority groups in this country. Their economic and political weight and leverage have been duly recognized by the government and the corporate world. As a spiritual institution, the Church is not driven by secular economic and political currents. Nevertheless, it cannot ignore size and numbers. They must be factored into the important plans and decisions of the Church of God. For this reason, it simply begs the question to suggest that to seek leadership representation based upon ethnicity is exclusivistic. Not every country has a seat at the United Nations. Though size is not the only factor in determining membership, it certainly plays a large role in it. Similarly, not every ethnic group can be represented at the highest levels of leadership in the Church. But the largest ones should! There is strength in size and numbers. The larger the size, the greater the voice.

7. While the idea of an ethnic melting pot or stew pot is a long and cherished American ideal, it will never be a reality in the secular world or in the Church. Unity that demands uniformity and

smothers diversity runs counter to the very creative genius of God. A more realistic concept, says Leonard Lovett, is that of the 'salad bowl,' where each ingredient retains its distinctive color and flavor, but tantalizes the taste buds when eaten together with other vegetables. Some would argue that this approach is divisive. Not necessarily so! We must appreciate the importance of size and numbers. We must also appreciate the importance of diversity. Diversity is a gift of God. Maturity embraces diversity in unity and unity in diversity. The Church is a body with many members, each having a different function yet working together toward a common goal. That is God's plan for the Church. That should be the Church of God's vision and practice.

Thanks for your serious consideration of this proposal. May God bless you in all your endeavors, deliberations and decisions for the furtherance of his kingdom.

August 18, 2000

To the International Executive Council
Church of God
Cleveland, TN. 37320

Dear Sirs:

We would like to submit this substitute motion in amendment of the bye-law **S4. EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, I. Selection, item # 2** in the **Minutes** of the Church of God, to read: 'The Executive Council is comprised of eighteen (18) elected members. Not less than ***seven (7)*** members shall be pastors at the time of their election. Further, two (2) members of the Council shall be from outside the U.S.A., ***and at least two (2) shall be non-Anglos, at least one (1) Hispanic and at least one (1) Black.***' (Amendment in italics.)[41]

Note that the amendment does not reflect the new nomenclature for the Council adopted at the last General Assembly, since that change has not been officially made to the **Minutes**.

The rationale for 7 or fewer members of the Council being pastors is that, in the case of Hispanics and Blacks, those who are in a position to represent their particular ethnic group may not be pastors but may function in some other important capacity in the Church.

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[41] Section 4 (2) reads: 'The Executive Council is comprised of the Executive Committee and eighteen (18) elected members. No less than nine (9) members shall be pastors at the time of their election. Further, two (2) members of the Council shall be from outside the U.S.A. No member of the Executive Committee who has just completed his tenure of office shall be eligible to serve on the Executive Council for the ensuing General Assembly term.' *Minutes of the 67th general Assembly, 1998*, p.128.

Part of Edwards' strategy in dealing with the language issue is to argue for the articulation of an 'international vocabulary'; additionally he argues for 'global thinking to fight this battle on an international stage'.[42] In his response to paragraph 1 of the motion he states:

> I believe the language of the motion which reflects the *Minutes* is very telling. References to 'non-Anglos' 'Black' and 'Hispanic' are decidedly American. This is an integral part of the problem. My view is that an international discussion has far too long been held captive to the myopia of the USA. We must get the discussion on to a global dimension, using an international vocabulary if the issue is not to be perceived as a few black pastors being awkward.[43]

Within the context of Church of God politics, the motion to increase 'non-Anglo' representation on the Executive Council can be seen as a *radical* move. However, in the broader cultural politics of race and representation this *intra*-Pentecostal document is a *conservative* attempt at challenging 'sectional' and racial hegemony. The language and politics of the document is, as Edwards argues, 'a little too deferential':

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[42] Correspondence between Joel Edwards and Trevor Grizzle, January 2002. In 1994, the sentiments and arguments of Edwards dominated the UK's *Critique of the Church of God General Assembly*. Recognizing the cultural and racial tensions in the Church of God, Edwards argues for 'affirmative action' to restructure the Church to address American cultural and geographical domination of a Church whose majority membership resides outside of the USA: 'Consequently, (at the General Assembly) the democratic process is strongly biased towards the American mainland which, in comparison to its overseas colleagues, dominates the Assembly by virtue of its geographical location and a distinct cultural milieu which has been developed over decades. This power base produces a 'lock-in' process by which names which are most familiar to resident Americans are most likely to emerge as prime candidates for key roles within the home and international appointments. This 'lock-in' must inevitably prove terminal for any aspirations of an international church...The internationalization of the Church of God is impossible without surgical application to its constitutional basis. Whilst the majority of the Church of God now resides outside the USA there is an effective voting block within the resident delegate. The Church requires urgent restructuring if this position is ever to be rectified...it is unlikely that internationalization will be realised unless positive, affirmative action is taken within the heart of the constitutional process.' (See *Critique*, p.2)

[43] Edwards, *Internationalization and the Church of God*, 2002.

> It sounds a bit like saying: 'I'm terribly sorry, you seem to have your foot on my neck and it's choking me a little. I know God will bless you as you think about removing it at your earliest convenience!' It's fine in the first minutes, but a bit too reverential after 25 years.[44]

Although section 3 of the proposed motion makes reference to the 'Hellenists' controversy in the Lucan narrative discussed earlier in chapter four, the biblical argument for 'organizational adjustment' is not developed.[45] What is, however, recognized is the analogous nature of the Hellenist situation in Acts 6 and Black struggles in the Church of God for equality in ministry: there is the perception (and 'potential danger') of these two respective sections of the Christian community feeling that they are 'second-class citizens', that they don't have an equal 'stake in the leadership of their own affairs'. The 'salad bowl' argument as a metaphor for 'multiculturalism' in Church of God leadership is criticized by Edwards; not so much because it negates the principle of multiculturalism, but rather because it legitimises a proportio-centric and 'segmented' paradigm of representation and diversity:

> The salad bowl argument makes me...worried. It is an argument of segmented diversity which could feed the segregationist which allows whites to rule 'over here', and let the Black and Hispanics (and the rest) rule over there, which is anywhere where the central power does

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44 Ibid.

45 Edwards (*Internationalization and the Church of God*) suggests that the theological argument for 'organizational adjustment' and multiculturalism would be better made by reference to Acts 13. The picture St. Luke gives of the first missionary church in Antioch is one of multicultural leadership; more specifically, there is the presence of Black/African leadership: 'Now there were at the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Baranabas, and Simon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.' (13:1) This 'racial pluralism' is commented upon by Cain Hope Felder in *The Original African Heritage Study Bible*: 'In this passage, we catch a glimpse of the racial and ethnic make-up of the religious leadership within the first "Christian" church and it is remarkably diverse with full African participation. Two persons of Africa are included, namely Simon who was called "Niger" (a Latinism for 'the black man') and Lucius of Cyrene, which is in northern Libya.' (p.1594)

> not exist. I suspect the salad bowl only really works where we start of with an equal amount of fruits.[46]

In spite of the failure of the 2000 motion for the principle of multiculturalism and the kind of equality in ministry which challenges cultural and 'sectional' hegemony, the motion demonstrated again the *racialization* of power and prestige in Church of God polity and the historic difficulties Black leaders face in challenging the apparatus and *cultural* politics of 'Anglo-American' domination. Black ministers on both sides of the Atlantic are of the view that the 'age old tensions of racial strife' continue to inform Church of God leadership[47] as well as hinder a 'God-honouring' and biblical ecclesiology[48] for a global church community. What the failed motion highlighted was the continual failure of the Church of God to bridge the *credibility gap* between the rhetoric and the reality of *internationalization* for its Black 'saints' twenty years after the resolution was passed.

In political and organisational terms, this credibility gap makes the Church of God morally vulnerable, especially in the eyes of its politically and theologically conscious young black constituents. The vulnerability alluded to in Paragraph 4 of the motion points to a Church that privileges what internationalization was intended to oppose, namely, a 'national, regional' and 'sectional image of the Church. Indeed, what the motion discloses is the political and sociological reality that until multiculturalism is reflected in the leadership the Church of God 'will not be able to defend itself against the

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46 Edwards, *Internationalization and the Church of God.*
47 *A Critique of the Church of God General Assembly*, p.5.
48 *Edwards, Internationalization and the Church of God.*

charge of being an *American Church* with an international membership'. Equally important for a predominantly Black Church of God in the UK, the so-called international Church of God will not be able to defend itself against the charge of being an '*Anglo-American*' Church where the gifts and ministry of Black people are epiphenomenonal to the leadership apparatus in the Church of God.

5.5 Resolution on Internationalization and Racism: 'The chief corner stone that the builders have rejected'

The realization of the 1980 Resolution on *Internationalization of the Church* has become the central focus of a sustained campaign among black Church of God leaders in the US and in the UK. It encompasses and concretises the struggle for a shift in the cultural and 'sectional' hegemony in the Church of God — i.e., what the spirit of the resolution intended in its opposition to any form of 'national', 'regional' or cultural imposition on the 'international character of the Church of God'.[49] The 'campaign of righteousness'[50], as Edwards terms it, by the New Testament Church in the UK to make internationalization of the church 'meaningful' in terms of 'polity, power-sharing and equality in ministry' is not only predicated on the 'multiculturalism of Antioch as the first missionary church'[51], but also on the

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[49] See 58th Minutes of the General Assembly, Church of God (1980), p. 50; 68th Millennium Edition, Minutes of the 68th General Assembly, Church of God (2000), p. 260.
[50] Interview with Joel Edwards, 23.10.02. The campaign, argues Edwards, 'should be seen as a campaign of righteousness, not vindictiveness'.
[51] Edwards, *Internationalization and the Church of God*, p.1. The significance of Edwards' notion of this form of 'multiculturalism' in Acts also functions as a nascent ethnic/cultural diversity motif to challenge the mono-cultural executive leadership in the Church of God.

declared values and norms in two fundamental resolutions of the church on internationalization and racism, passed in 1980 and 2000 respectively.

The protreptic and prophetic discourse of Joel Edwards, Ira Brooks and others in the NTCG[52] can only be fully understood within the hermeneutical context of the 'multiculturalism of Acts' alluded to by Edwards, on the one hand, along with a growing socio-political consciousness of black British Pentecostals in their personal and organisational[53] challenges to racism and discrimination in Britain, on the other hand.

There is a dialectical relationship between the *Resolution on Internationalization*, and the *Resolution on Racism and Ethnic Disparity* passed two decades later. The conceptual, moral, and political coherence

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[52] A former member of the NTCG National Executive Council is of the view that UK members' 'campaign on the issue of internationalization in the Church of God is seen as an affront' to the hierarchy. This, probably, explains the 'stone-walling' of, and indifference to, NTCG leaders by Cleveland and the apparent adoption of what amounts to a 'denial' syndrome.

[53] A number of NTCG members are at the forefront of the equalities agenda in Britain. These include the following: Angela Sarkis CBE, Harrow NTCG (Cabinet Office Advisor, Social Exclusion Unit and former Chief Executive of the Church Urban Fund); Floyd Millen, Mile End NTCG (Director of Race On the Agenda); Bev Thomas, Herne Hill NTCG (former Director of Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice and currently at the Churches Commission on Racial Justice); Bishop Derek Webley, George Street Birmingham NTCG (Independent member of the West Midlands Police Authority, with a race, community and equalities portfolio); Revd., Joel Edwards (General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, and Independent Adviser to the Metropolitan Police Service with a anti-racist portfolio, equalities and church-community relations). Edwards gave written and oral evidence at the ground-breaking Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1998; he was also one of the original members of Metropolitan Police Service's Independent Advisory Group (IAG) set up by DAC John Grieve as part of the Racial & Violent Crime Task Force to tackle race-hate crime in London. There is, undoubtedly, a sense of schizophrenia at work in some of these individuals, a sense of personal and political incongruity and existential contradiction in what they struggle against in society and what they are vicariously a part of in Church of God ecclesiology: racism. As one of the leading voices in the NCTG protreptic discourse on equality in ministry and *institutionalising* 'internationalization', Edwards seems to indicate that the genealogy on the onset of this form of black Pentecostal schizophrenia starts with 'an acute sense of embarrassment' over the chasm between rhetoric and reality in Church of God polity.

between the two resolutions allow critics of Church of God polity and practice to hold up these corporate declarations as the mirror by which the face and profile of internationalization can be judged. They also provide the moral and biblical legitimacy for the campaign to change the historic racial and cultural hegemony of the church, reflecting its changing 'international character'. The centrality of these two 'cornerstones' in the campaign to change the *cultural* politics of the Church of God warrants quoting them in full. The '*Resolution on Internationalization*' states:

> WHEREAS communication, industrialization and expanding technology makes it obvious that peoples of our world are drawing closer together; and
>
> WHEREAS this church has experienced phenomenal growth, especially in other nations and among other cultures of our world; and
>
> WHEREAS there seems an obvious need for strengthening ties between the Church of God, U.S.A., and those congregations, missions, and fellow laborers in more than one hundred nations of our world; and
>
> WHEREAS it has never been the will or the intent of this church to segment or in any way differentiate between bodies of believers since Jesus Christ taught and emphasized the brotherhood of all believers through divine grace;
>
> THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly recognises and accepts its responsibility for promoting the internationalization of the Church of God and that we herewith dedicate ourselves anew to the designing of programs and to the initiating of steps which will accomplish this purpose; and
>
> BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our department heads and those who set policies and give emphasis to our education programs be encouraged to promote this concept; and that henceforth in all our publications and in all our official and private correspondence, we endeavor to recognize the international character of the Church of God as opposed to any national, regional, or sectional image.[54]

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[54] Minutes of the 68th General Assembly, pp. 259-260.

The *Resolution on Racism & Ethnic Disparity* states:

> WHEREAS the Church of God from its inception has contended to be inclusive of people regardless of gender, cultural background or race; and
>
> WHEREAS the 50th General Assembly in 1964 adopted a resolution on human rights affirming the worth of every individual; and
>
> WHEREAS every race bears the image of God and has its origin in Adam who is the father of all mankind; and
>
> WHEREAS in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free men, men nor women, but we are all one in Him; and
>
> WHEREAS the Resolution on Leadership and World Vision in the *1990 General Assembly Minutes* commits the church to be 'international...transcending culture, race, nationalism, and politics; and
>
> WHEREAS we are beholden to a Christ-like example and lifestyle, one of acceptance, affirmation, and unconditional love;
>
> THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this International General Assembly recognizes all members of the body of Christ as equal in function and consequence, and every race and ethnic distinction a valuable and necessary field for the winning of souls and the furtherance of the kingdom of God upon this earth; and
>
> BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT we commit towards the elimination of racism and bigotry, corporately identifying racism and bigotry as sinful hindrances which prevent us from truly realizing brotherhood and Christian love within and outside the body of the international church and the many peoples and races which it reaches and encompasses.[55]

As aspirational statements, the *Resolution on Racism & Ethnic Disparity* and the *Resolution on Internationalization* portray the ideals to which the church gives mental and moral opprobrium. However, the internal struggles for parity in ministry, and black representation in the upper echelons of the

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55 Minutes of the 68th General Assembly of the Church of God, p. 280.

organisation over the last two decades, point to a profound dissonance (credibility gap in witness and practice) in the perpetuation of an Anglo-American cultural domination and occupation of the Executive and senior positions in the organisation.

5.6 Resolving Historic Organizational Inequality and Arguments for Secession

The incongruity between declared biblical and moral philosophy and organisational practice— along with the maintenance and cultural hegemony which privileges 'sectional' image (i.e., white American)— amounts to institutional racism and the 'collective failure'[56] of the organisation to model its principles. This failure of the Church of God to use the ethics and biblical values enshrined in its resolutions as building blocks in the construction of a truly international ecclesiology has left the NTCG in the UK with a fundamental problem in 'race relations'. This problem was recognised by Phyllis Thompson in the 1980s when the Cleveland HQ established the 'Metro' Church concept in the UK. The black-white power relations— the 'apartheid system[57]'— and *cultural* 'politics' in the Church of God militate against the multicultural and multi-racial ethos of the UK's NTCG.

Twelve years before the *Unity of the Spirit* conference, Phyllis Thompson,[58] a young second generation education graduate at Mile End

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[56] In the closing year of the last century one report above all other to challenge and inform public opinion on racism was the Macpherson Report (The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, London, TSO, CM4262-1: February 1999.

[57] See Phyllis Thompson's Private Papers, *Letter to Rev J. McIntyre*, General Overseer of the NTCG, 10 January 1984; Ira Brooks, Letter to Joel Edwards, 2 February, 1995.

[58] Phyllis Thompson is Associate Pastor of Mile End NTCG.

NTCG, raised concerns about the discontinuity in the rhetoric on 'internationalization' and the 'apartheid system' that was imposed in the UK by the Church of God Executive in Cleveland. The Church of God in the US, without consultation[59] with the NTCG, the British branch, had decided to set up a 'white' Church of God in the UK to 'win the people of Caucasian race because the black Pentecostals were not winning the white natives to the churches'.[60] Historically, an organisational precedent was already set for the marginalisation of black leadership and contribution to Church of God evangelistic mission and development by articulating a rationalisation not too dissimilar to the one advanced for what became known as 'metrofication'.

Thompson, like Brooks, saw this American imposition as being both racist and a serious threat to the historic multiracial witness of the young NTCG in Britain. Thompson's letter of protest to the NTCG National Overseer, Rev McIntyre, about the development of what was called 'Metro Evangelism' raised three critical issues in Church of God polity and *cultural* 'politics'. Firstly, the establishment of a 'white' Church of God constitutionally independent from the NTCG, without consultation with the latter, politically indicated the neo-colonial relationship which existed between Cleveland and Overstone. Secondly, as a missionary and evangelistic strategy it tried to replicate the racialised and homogenised[61] congregational

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59 See Ira Brooks, Another Gentleman to the Ministry, p.94.

60 Ibid., p.95.

61 Charles E. Blake argues that the sociological theory underlining the 'principle of homogeneity' allows Pentecostals to justify their 'separateness' and accommodate themselves to the status quo. (See his 'The Future: A Strategy for Reconciliation, Response to a Paper Presented by Dr Vinson Synan' in *Pentecostal Partners*.) The concept of 'Metro

cleavages of the US, paying insufficient notice to the multiracial fabric of the UK's inner cities and the move toward racial harmony. Thirdly, in light of the recent resolution on internationalisation, the *de facto* message to black leadership in the UK was one of being inferior partners in ministry and 'soul winning', especially in its mission to whites.[62]

Thompson viewed the imposition of the philosophy of 'Metro evangelism' in Britain by the Church of God as a 'most disturbing experience', establishing an 'alien' ideology in the UK and perpetuating the legacy and culture of a flawed ecclesiology. She also points out some of the personal, social and political implications of this policy:

> On Sunday I had what I would describe as a rich worship service on one level and on another level a most disturbing experience. We had a guest speaker introduced as evangelist Robinson who, I later learnt, is a member of the 'white' Church of God. I question, with respect, the thinking behind this apartheid system within the denomination to which I pledge my loyalty. It seems to me that the wish and hope for a worldwide Church of God is totally lacking. What is the biblical explanation for this separation? And really, what testimony have we, on this line, as a Spirit-filled Church to the racist world in which we try to live faithful Christian lives—which for some of us includes making decisions towards racial harmony for non-Christians? I...cannot adopt this separatist...policy in my own life.[63]

The implications of Thompson's protest letter were clear: by 'planting' a 'white' Metro Church in the UK, independent of NTCG control (Black

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Evangelism', or the establishment of the 'Metro Church' was in effect the Church of God instituting the principle of homogeneity in Britain.

[62] General Overseer Dr Oliver A. Lyseight recalls the founding of the NTCG in 1953 and the inclusion of white families among its first congregation: 'The first public service held by some NTCOG members was in September 1953 at the YMCA Hall, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands, under the direction of O.A. Lyseight and H.D. Brown. When the Church was later organised with twenty-five members, three White British families were included.' See O.A. Lyseight, Forward March: An Autobiography, West Midlands, Birches Printers:1995, p.j.

[63] Phyllis Thompson, op. cit.

leadership), the Church of God was seeking to *reproduce* the cultural ideology of race and class cleavages which characterised Church of God ecclesiology in America. The racialised configuration of Church of God ecclesiology in America– the 'principle of homogeneity'– was the historic norm; in the UK, there were socio-political and cultural forces working against segregation and homogeneity.[64] Although Thompsom saw her initial thoughts as 'undeveloped as they are', they nonetheless underlined what was perceived as fundamentally wrong with the Metro policy of the Church of God.

Essentially, Thompson's arguments needed little further development, for they resonated with, and were aligned to, a coherent discourse in the Church of God by its black leaders for true equality in ministry and cultural diversity in the distribution of power and prestige in the organisation[65]; her

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[64] In the UK, the 1980s were characterised by new and creative efforts to build social cohesion through the multicultural/antiracist agenda. In London, this agenda, to large extent, defined the philosophy, policy and practice of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). Social and educational policies were related to the wider international problems of racism and discrimination, especially the struggle in South Africa against apartheid. Second generation Pentecostals like Thompson, Edwards, Sarkis and Thomas were active participants in this agenda. For Thompson, the imposition of a Metro Church militated against biblical and political principles she was struggling against in society; to have to contend with the same problems of race inside the Church of God was 'deplorable'.

[65] See Joseph Jackson, op. cit., pp.15-19. Commenting upon the lack of responsiveness of Church of God leadership to black demands in America for 'civil rights', equality in ministry, and greater responsibility and administrative control of their congregations, Jackson says: 'A closer look reveals these congregations are successful in growth and financial stability and have a mind set on equality. Despite their success, it has been many years since these church members have been allowed the responsibility of organizing themselves under their own administrative leadership, and thus to have a direct involvement in deciding the direction they ultimately go...Florida blacks, however, spent many years in continuous battles with the leadership of the church. They know better than anyone else the struggles that minorities face. Civil rights struggles are also being waged in the church. And, to a great degree, the church has been more reluctant to change than social institutions, despite the scriptural injunction that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3: 28). It seems that this injunction pertains to the major culture and not to blacks. The indigenous blacks of the Church of God in the United States have come to recognize that they too are viewed as

ideas also anticipated many of the substantive issues of racial reconciliation and power-sharing raised in Memphis and Cleveland in 1994 and 1996 respectively. In Thompson, like Sibley and Edwards later, one sees the personal and mature reflections of biblically and politically conscious black Church of God protagonist highlighting the contradictions in Church of God philosophy, polity and practice in respect to its treatment of its 'Colored work'.

What Thompson does, in fact, is to unmask the contradiction between the 1980 resolution on *Internationalization*, with its principled biblical ethos of negating 'differentiation between bodies of believers' and a renewed responsibility for 'promoting the international character of the Church of God', and the cultural and organisational reality of an imposed racialised ecclesiology. Thompson's letter did not only illustrate the *cultural* 'politics' of the Church of God Executive in the decade of 'internationalization', it also demystified the underlying existence of the racialisation of *church* 'politics' and the inability of Church of God ecclesiology 'transcending culture, race, nationalism and politics'.[66]

Like the experience of the early church community, ecclesiology is often a judicious admixture of revealed/biblical injunctions and human and institutional appropriation and approximations of these injunctions and principles. Once the sociology of power relations are demystified, and de-

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individuals in a mission state. The manner in which they are dealt with is at times different, but the ultimate intention seems the same, namely that those blacks whose desire it is to become leaders within the mainstream of the church be discouraged and passed over.' (p. 15) See also Sibley, op. cit., pp.3-5; Ellis, op. cit., pp.3-4.

[66] See 'Resolution on Leadership and World Vision', in the Church of God *1990 General Assembly Minutes.*

spiritualised, the realities of *church* 'politics' are disclosed: Church of God polity seldom rises or transcend 'politics', for 'politics' are what the history of cultural hegemony, 'sectional image', and racialised forms of Church of God ecclesiology have been about to those arguing for a more representative church.[67]

The so-called 'undeveloped' thoughts of Thompson finally reached the Church of God oligarchs in Cleveland via the UK's General Overseer.[68] McIntyre's deferential language[69] was characteristic of the way NTCG behaved toward Cleveland, illustrating a 'parent-child' relationship. Ira Brooks provided a theological and socio-historical framework to interrogate and, ultimately, challenge this deferential behavioural pattern; he also '*politicised*' the language of the discourse by disclosing some of the historic and cultural forces at work in Church of God polity which perpetuated Anglo-

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[67] The struggle against 'institutional racism' in the church was recognised by J. McIntyre, as being part of this 'politics'. In his response to Thompson, he says: 'The issues you raised are not new to this administration. Several of them have been raised in a number of high places within the church, in our country, Europe and in the U.S.A.'

[68] In his response of 31 January 1984, Overseer McIntyre assured Thompson that her letter had gone 'to some very important people'. The private papers and correspondence of Thompson show that the Phyllis' letter, along with McIntyre's letter to Dr E.C. Thomas, the General Overseer of the Church of God in Cleveland, were officially copied to Rev. Lambert DeLong, Rev. Jim O. McClain, Sr., Dr Cecil Knight and I. Lewinson. There are no indications that McIntyre's letters were copied to Ira Brooks, but one can assume that Thompson would have kept him informed of the nature of the response and developments since she had originally included copies her original letter to Brooks, her father and Mother Beccan, pastor of the New Testament Church at Mile End.

[69] In his letter to Dr Thomas, General Overseer of the Church of God, Overseer McIntyre says concerning the policy of the Metro Church that is causing division in the UK: 'I apologise to you for adding to the burden which I know you must bear. In the past I would have remained silent, but I am now convinced that it is my duty to keep both our Superintendent and yourself fully informed on all ecclesiastical matters developing in the U.K., reflecting on our Church.' A similar differential attitude is displayed in the March 1996 Petition to Dr Robert White and the Executive Council of the Church of God by black ministers at the *Unity of the Spirit* conference: '...please take immediate steps to appoint people of color to vital positions of leadership in the Church of God...Such actions demonstrate our determination to do what is right. Parity is of utmost importance to an international denomination.'

American hegemony and a 'master-servant role of leadership'.[70] The implications for the gospel, as well as the wider societal implications, of imposed homogeneity in the UK are clearly expressed by Thompson in the issues raised with Overseer McIntyre in her questions:

> Can the races not worship together and serve one another in Christ? What precedent are we leaving for the new generation within the fold of the church and their way of thinking about the world in which they live? I think rather than making or accepting this deplorable move, the Church should be actively praying for a multi-racial/cultural mix on the General Executive Council and in national churches such as ours and South Africa. How can a denomination ask individuals to live lives which go against the tide in society while itself condones ideologies which are alien to its doctrines? Where will all this end?
>
> Surely white American members and black 'British' members can pool their spiritual resources and life experience for the 'growth' of the kingdom here on earth, let alone the denomination. What of other races in our society who will not necessarily categorise themselves in terms of 'black' and 'white'?...When will the laity who support the Church be informed/brought into the discussion/be consulted about all this?[71]

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70 Another Gentleman to the Ministry, p.93; 'Where Do We Go From Here?', pp.73-74.
71 Thompson, op. cit.

Phyllis Thompson, Associate Pastor, Mile End New Testament Church of God.

Phyllis is an educator and writer. In the early 1980s Phyllis raised fundamental questions about the new *Metro* evangelism philosophy of the Church of God.

Ira Brooks raised the question of secession of the NTCG from the Church of God in the US in the 1980s. As a defining moment in Church of God black consciousness, the exodus of 1965 points to a course of action that may have to be faced by NTCG leadership as second and third generation black British members become more aware of the history and practice of the organisation. The views of Bishop Melvin Powell and Dr. Samuel Ellis provide two opposite poles for creative discourse and action. In 1996, Dr Samuel G. Ellis communicated his profound sadness at the *Unity of the Spirit* conference concerning the status of black leaders in the Church and the 'spirit of racism' that overshadow it.

What Ellis stated is on one hand a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of racism in the Church of God and the 'southern' mind-set — a mind-set historically informed by the type of paternalism and prejudice of members who 'would rather see the Negro under the binding law of "Jim Crow" than the saving law of Jesus Christ'[72] — and on the other hand a reminder of forms of *resistance* and symbolic acts of Black Christian integrity in the face of marginalization and racism in the church. Ellis relates his concern and 'sadness' thus:

> I must confess though that I am sad about two things: first the status of the Church at this present moment in history, as it stands with a cloud hovering overhead, that there is not a single person of color that holds any elected office within the Church of God. Second, a friend of mine, Bishop Horace Hawes, who came to Lee College over thirty years ago with a black student who was barred from enrolling into the

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72 Mickey Crews, op. cit., p.164. These views were expressed in a survey conducted at Lee College (Church of God higher education college) in 1947 under Professor George Brazell to test white students' relationships with Blacks and Orientals. Crews cites the unpublished paper of one of the students at Lee College, Charles R. Beach ('Jim Crow or Jesus Christ'). See also Gerloff, op. cit., p.102.

school. Bishop Hawes left the church subsequent to that, seeing racism at its ugliest. I am sad because a few weeks ago in January my friend died. It was his desire and prayer to come to Cleveland, Tennessee, and set foot on the campus of Lee College and hear the presentation...during this conference, to a place where he was denied entrance. One of his most challenging statements to me was: 'Ellis, don't leave; they desire you to leave so the same spirit of racism can rule the church.' He told me to stay within and fight the good fight of faith and God will do the healing.[73]

The problem of racism, and the exodus from the church as a consequence, are realities for black members. The latter can be interpreted as *the* defining symbolic act of resistance and black integrity. Black 'Powellism', as the phrase suggests[74] from the experience and subsequent actions of Bishop Powell, is the conscious decision and symbolic act to leave the Church of God on account of its racialized polity, practices and cultural hegemony. Bishop Powell, leader and founder of the New Testament Assembly (NTA) in the UK, relates his exodus from the Church of God in the 1950s:

> I emigrated to the United States of America in the early fifties. While I was there, I took courses in Theology to further my knowledge of the Word of God. I corresponded with the Church of God Theological college in Cleveland, Tennessee. I first attended the General Assembly there in 1952. The impression I got from the meeting was a disappointing one, for both the black congregation and the white congregation were separated from each other. On another occasion when I visited the church in Indiana, the white usher I met at the door told me that I was at the wrong church! Whereupon, I asked him, 'Is this not a branch of the Church of God?' 'Yes', he assured me. 'But your church is down the road a few blocks from here', he affirmed. After a short walk I came to a church where the all-black congregation

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[73] Ellis, op. cit., p.1.

[74] While there may be a proclivity for some readers to associate my use of 'Powellism' as a concept to characterize the experience and response of Bishop Melvin Powell of the NTA with the racist ideology of Enoch Powell, the Conservative politician whose 1968 'rivers of blood speech' became a landmark in British politics and race relations, no such association is intended.

assured me that they were indeed a branch of the same Church of God, and so I realised that the usher whom I met at the first church was obliged to get rid of me so that the white congregation could enjoy peace of mind. Perplexed, I returned to my island-home in 1954, and, as a result of my experience in the United States, I submitted my resignation from the New Testament Church of God...To heighten the disgust of West Indian churchmen, during that same period, the National Executive Council of that Church in Jamaica...still had a white American majority...running the church's affairs for the island.[75]

The response of Ellis and Powell can be seen as the critical political and personal spectrum within which ethical choices are made in the struggle for equality. Powell's response points to a sense of integrity and responsible personal agency in light of personal dissatisfaction and profound disillusionment with Church of God ecclesiology and *cultural* politics. Ellis' response, on the other hand, demonstrates a considerable degree of patience and loyalty in the face of personal dissatisfaction and discrimination to remain within the organisation and fight for transformation. It would be incorrect to argue that 'Powellism' is more *moral* than 'Ellisism': both responses are equally valid, they are *moral* and *political* responses to organizational inequality historically informed by a racist mind-set. However, the integrity question in the responses will, as Edwards argues, be judged by the time it takes to bring about meaningful change after twenty five years or more of 'reverential' struggles.[76]

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75 Quoted in Ira Brooks, Another Gentleman to the Ministry, pp.104-105.
76 Edwards, *Internationalization and the Church of God*, p.2.

The reality of the new Black church spoken of by Brooks, and depicted in the art and aesthetic representation of Judy Tomlin from Mile End NTCG,[77] comprises of a new generation (second and third generation Black British Christians) of 'Church of God saints' who are young, gifted and *politically conscious*. Unlike the majority of their immigrant parents[78], second and third generation 'saints' see no dichotomy between their faith and their political commitments. Indeed, as Beckford argues,

> Many young Black Pentecostals now feel that it is *impossible* to be black and Christian without being explicitly political — that is, being actively engaged with the transformation of the social and political world.[79]

In the multi-cultural and pluralistic society of metropolitan and post-modern Britain, many of these socially and politically conscious members would not only view the continuing struggle for equality in the church — the long march to attaining a truly representative and international leadership of the Church of God — as an affront to their Christian integrity and black

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[77] The artist and teacher Judy Tomlin uses glass as her medium. The stained glass windows at Mile End New Testament Church were designed by her in 1997. Her exhibitions celebrate black history and black religious experience. Of particular significance is her piece entitled '*Phyllis*'. The work depicts a strong, proud, elegant black woman, adorned in tradition African dress and jewellery. The portrayal is decidedly that of the author and educationalist, Phyllis Thompson, of Mile End Church. In the eyes, and imagination, of the artist, Phyllis represents a new political and religious consciousness. Like Claudia, and some of the other characters in Thompson's *Tangled Lives*, these are second generation Christians for whom Afrocentricity is a significant factor in the matrix of their political consciousness. These graduates are at ease in quarrelling 'with the church deacons' who regard certain fashionable hairstyles, clothes and jewellery as 'deviation from holiness and a stumbling block to would be Christians and those who were new to the faith'; they are equally at ease with the music of Bob Marley 'playing quietly in the background'. (See Here to Stay: A Collection of Stories by Women, Phyllis Thompson et al., Oxford, Lion Publishing plc: 1990, pp. 46-47.) Women like these were among the 40% of the new black church Ira Brooks argued that were not 'taken into account' by the American hierarchy's assessment of the mood of the church in Britain. (See Anita Jackson, op. cit.,)

[78] See Ira Brooks, 'Where Do We Go From Here?' p.74.

[79] Robert Beckford, Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain, London, Darton, Longman & Todd:1998, pp.2-3.

identity, but also an infraction of Christian witness in the world. For Black British NTCG leaders like Edwards, reconciliation and internationalization, must be substantiated in policy and practice: 'reconciliation is not a synonym for assimilation' and 'true unity must take place between adult consenting communities' engendering a polity and church culture 'which affirm each person without destroying the unity of the Body'.[80]

The struggle for internationalization, and the articulation by black ministers of perceived and *actual* problems in representation in the Church of God, underlines the enduring problematic of race in Pentecostalism. The moral and biblical ethics implied in the resolutions, in so far as real multiracial executive power-sharing are concerned, have no institutional correspondence. The ethnic and cultural profile of the Church of God Executive Committee, since the passage of the resolution on Internationalization, has not changed significantly to represent the reality of the 'international character of the church'.[81]

Empirically, the sociology of power in Church of God oligarchy remains substantially unchanged; culturally, the distribution of *prestige* positions are heavily skewed toward Anglo-American 'sectional image' and cleavage; and spiritually and psychologically, transformations in polity and organisational culture remain impervious to the dignified and protreptic

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80 Joel Edwards, *The England Happening: A Brief Account of the Black Christian Experience*, p.20.

81 From 1980-2000, the Executive Committee remained Anglo-American (see profile on p. 263). Joseph E. Jackson (author of *Reclaiming Our Heritage*) and Wallace Sibley (former Director of Black Evangelism, and leading participant at the 1994 *Unity of the Spirit* conference), were the two Black ministers appointed on the Council of Eighteen. The Executive Committee and the Council of Eighteen comprise the International Executive Council. (See 68th General Assembly Minutes, S5. p.137.)

arguments of black ministers in the US and NTCG leaders in the UK for a move towards an inclusive ecclesiology and away from structures which perpetuate 'an ethos parent-child role'.[82]

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[82] *A Critique of the Church of God General Assembly in Relation to its Internationalization*, August 1994, by the New Testament Church of God Executive Council.

Conclusion
'Where Do We Go From Here?' Agency, Alternatives and the Pneumatological Assumption of Liberation

0.0 The Struggles Continue...

In chapter 5, I have argued that the Church of God has failed to institutionalize equality in ministry and move away from its historic Anglo-American domination to reflect both the church's international composition and its 'internationalization' resolution. In this concluding chapter, I will explore the perceptions of this failure by Black leaders on both sides of the Atlantic; I also want to suggest symbolic ways in which Black agency might respond to the continuing struggle for equality in the Church of God in the twenty first century.

Black struggles in the Church of God for racial equality and parity in ministry, and leadership, is as old as the organisation itself. From the time of its founder, A.J. Tomlinson, to the present day, racism and the perennial 'colour-line' have ensured that black members of this 'body of Christ' have been neither '*equal in function*' nor in '*consequence*'[1]. Culturally and politically, black members have not featured in the leadership of the international Church of God. This reality has occasioned disappointment, as Ellis indicated, but it may ultimately lead to what I described in the last chapter as form of Black 'Powellism' and secession on the part of NTCG politically and biblically literate younger generation.

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[1] See *Resolution on Racism and Ethnic Disparity*.

The issue of racism and race equality in the Church of God is still an *intra*-Pentecostal dilemma; it is no less insidious than the historic 'American dilemma' it mirrors and reproduces. Black leaders in the Church of God on both sides of the Atlantic may have to resign themselves to living with this *intra*-Pentecostal dilemma and find creative ways to negotiate its power relations. However, as second and third generation Black members in the U.K. interact with U.S. leaders, and become more aware of the history and nature of racial inequality in the leadership and representation of the Church, they are less likely to be as tolerant and patient as their parents' generation were about racism in the organisation. There are, at least, three reasons for suggesting this.

Firstly, there is the Biblical model of the nascent 'multiculturalism' in Antioch (Acts 13:1), referred to by Edwards, where one sees ethnic diversity in ministry/leadership. By positing a Biblical model of 'multiculturalism' and ethnic diversity, there is also a critical perspective on some of the ideological questions raised by Cone and Black 'conscious' activists about slavery/racism and the African presence in the Bible. This is an important perspective in the Biblical and 'political education' of second and third generation members of Mile End NTCG, especially with the aid of *The Original African Heritage Bible*. The use of this Bible as a resource in Mile End New Testament Church during Black History Month[2] to explore themes of Black Theology, identity

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[2] See Cain Hope Felder (ed), The Original African Heritage Study Bible, KJV, Nashville, Tennessee, James C. Winston Publishing Company:1993. The editor argues: 'For too long in the history of Western civilisation, persons of African descent have been stereotyped in negative ways which have caused them to question not only their identity but also their part in God's plan of salvation...The purpose of *The African Heritage Study Bible* is to interpret

and black religious experience is, undoubtedly, a didactic and spiritual agent to counter, and contest, the mediation of 'whiteness' in historical and religious discourse; it is also helping second and third generation black Pentecostals develop a matrix for what Brooks calls 'a Black Christian political consciousness'.[3] Images mediating the physical and historical presence of people of African descent in the Bible have a didactic and therapeutic effect upon its readers, as Yvonne Barrett of Mile End explains:

> Too often we are told that Christianity is a 'White man's religion'. There is a lot of racism attached to this idea...some of it goes back to the idea of Black people being cursed in the Old Testament (the curse of Ham), slavery and the treatment of Black people... What these pictures (in the African Heritage Bible) and comments show is quite the opposite...it shows that Black people...people of African descent have been a part of Bible history and Christianity...It makes me feel good to know this...more people need to understand this part of our history.[4]

Secondly, there is the political and professional imperative of Black British reality: 'politically conscious' Church of God members will find it increasingly difficult to maintain their integrity with 'outsiders' if they are

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the Bible as it relates specifically to persons of African descent and thereby to foster an appreciation of the multiculturalism inherent in the Bible...(p.v) God has no respect to persons, race, color, gender, or social status...This volume should release Blacks from forever having to be on the defensive when relating their Christian experience and the experiences of their forefathers. This volume is to help retrieve black people back into the fold of Christ!' (p.7) During Black History Month (October) 2002, Mile End New Testament Church of God explored Black History and Black Christian identity. The African Heritage Bible was used to explore the 'Black/African presence in the Bible' and the psychology of religious iconography—or more directly: how black Christians feel about iconographic and pictorial representations of themselves in the Bible. All the pictures in the Heritage Bible depict people of African descent, and one of the avowed aims is to use Afrocentricity to combat racism in Western civilisation.

3 Interview with Ira Brooks, 17 May, 1988.

4 Mile End NTCG, Black History Month, October 2002, ('Week 2: 'Black Theology and the Black Presence in the Bible', 10.10.02). The didactic use of 'Black Theology' and the Bible for a Black Christian education of liberation is developed by Anthony G. Reddie, Nobodies to Somebodies: A Practical Theology for Education and Liberation, Peterborough, Epworth Press:2003, pp.141-177.

seen to be consciously or 'unwittingly' colluding with a racist ecclesiology. Thirdly, and this is especially important for NTCG members living in London (nearly 30 per cent of the membership is concentrated in the capital city), there are a number of Black/African-Led Pentecostal churches[5] as culturally and politically viable alternatives to the Church of God. Former members of NTCG are already finding a spiritual home in these churches.

What black struggles for inclusion in the executive leadership of the Church of God reveal, is the extent to which race and *cultural hegemony* condition and inform polity and the distribution of power and prestige. In spite of the resolutions discussed above, this distribution of power remains, decidedly, 'Anglo-American' and 'southern'.

The essence of the critique of the Church of God by its Black leaders is that unless radical steps are taken to address this historical problem, the notion of 'internationalization of the church' will remain the 'sounding brass' and 'tinkling cymbal'[6] of organizational nomenclature, masking *power relations* and inequality in ministry. Accordingly, Edwards, and other black leaders, see internationalization as both a biblical and a political imperative, requiring a new theology of Church of God missiology[7] and a new morality at the 'heart of the constitutional process'[8] in addressing Anglo-American hegemony. What was advocated in 1994 by Edwards and the NTCG Executive goes to the heart of the politics of cultural hegemony and 'Anglo-

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5 These would include the popular Kingsway International Christian Centre under the charismatic leadership of Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, Glory House, Green Pastures, New Wine, and Ruach Ministries under the leadership of Bishop John Francis.

6 See I Corinthians 13:1.

7 See Edwards, *Internationalization and the Church of God.*

8 See *A Critique of the Church of God General Assembly,* p.2.

American' domination: representation at all levels of leadership, especially the ruling International Executive Council, should include those who are culturally and ethnically 'outside the USA'.[9]

The U.K.'s proposal is far more radical than the U.S. Black ministers' proposed motion of 2000: in the latter case, there is a call for 'at least two... non-Anglos' (one 'Hispanic' and one 'Black'), but this is framed within the context of only 'two members shall be from outside the United States'; in the former case, the suggestion for at least six such members coming from outside the U.S.A. Jackson maintains that the titularity of the nomenclature of internationalization will only have meaning for blacks and other ethnic groups when this biblical, cultural and political aspiration and organizational value informs the leadership of the church—when black leaders who desire to become 'leaders within the mainstream of the church' are not 'discouraged and passed over'.[10]

The three recommended constitutional changes proposed by the NTCG Executive in 1994 to address the issue of 'national' and sectional image' in pursuit of internationalization would, if realized, amount to a paradigm shift; it would constitute a Copernican type revolution in Church of

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9 The cultural and ethnic argument for numerical representation is expressed thus: '(a) The General Education Board should have three of its five positions based *outside* the USA, (b) Of the Council of Eighteen, at least one third should be mandated from *outside* the USA, (c) At least one of the Assistant General Overseer should be mandated from outside the USA. Only then could the church at an Executive/Council level truly claim to be an international church.' (See *A Critique,* p.2.)

10 Jackson, op. cit., p.15.

God ecclesiology and possibly draw to a close the historic black 'civil rights struggles'[11] being waged in the church.

From an examination of the racialization of power and prestige in the Church of God, the imposition and reproduction of a racialised ecclesiology in the UK through 'Metro evangelism', and the historic struggles for equality and representation in the Cleveland oligarchy, the inevitable question that will be posed by second and third generation NTCG leaders will be inescapable: How long can black Christians remain part of a structure that practice racism without seriously damaging their credibility and 'witness' in the eyes of the politically conscious younger generation and the wider society?

The insights of James Cone's Black Theology, and the question posed by Robert Beckford, may enable Black leaders in the Church to either intensify their struggle for equality and representation in the central decision-making body of the Church of God, or biblically and politically prepare to explore a form of Powellism. 'Is it possible', says Beckford, 'to be a Black Pentecostal Christian and Black conscious?' Black members in the Church of God, on both sides of the Atlantic, have in their struggles for equality and parity in ministry answered the question in the affirmative.

With greater political consciousness among second and third generation NTCG members forged in the context of Black British experience, as well as greater educational opportunities afforded them, this new political consciousness will sooner or later force them to question the very basis of

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[11] Ibid.

affiliation and association with a religious organisation in the United States of America which still appears to be wedded to an 'anachronistic' and racialised form of polity.

Undoubtedly, such a racialized polity and ministry paradigm will increasingly be seen to be out of step with both biblical equality and social justice. Modern Pentecostalism began at the turn of the last century with the sign of 'tongues' and what was perceived to be the radical equality symbol of the *glossolalia* phenomenon. The challenge for all in the Church of God at the turn of this century is to articulate a new language of equality in leadership and ministry to demonstrate the fruit and reality of the Holy Spirit in the world and in the Church. For Edwards, this is principally about the reconfiguration and articulation of the Pentecostal theology of 'initial evidence' into the lived-experience of 'substantial evidence'.

0.1 Beyond Race: Faith, Hope and Pneumatology

Addressing issues of race and Black representation in the hierarchy of the Church of God in the context of its vision of 'internationalization' are, of course, important matters of polity and the distribution of power as noted above. Ultimately, there is, however, the critical issue of what I will call the *assumption* of the pneumatological dimension in Black Pentecostal personal and organisational development. This assumption is predicated upon the spiritual equality which Spirit baptism, symbolized in glossolalia, brings. In the book of Acts, the Apostle Peter relates the singular phenomenon that

astonished and convinced those of 'the circumcision' that God had instituted a new order of spiritual equality by giving the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles:

> Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who had heard the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles, too. And there could be no doubt about it, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, 'Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?' (Acts 10:44-47)

What are the implications of this pneumatological assumption for Black Pentecostals and Black Theology in Britain? I want to suggest three critical areas. Firstly, there is the arena of personal development and acceptance of Black identity and the self as gifts from God. This is a precondition of the pneumatological assumption and spiritual equality. If God has given us His Spirit, we have to live out His acceptance of us by truly accepting ourselves. To do otherwise is to pay homage to incarnational symbolism at the expense of its realization in lived-experience. In practical terms, the pneumatological assumption should help individuals to rise above feelings of being 'second class' citizens; it should empower them to challenge the historic enlightenment fetish about Black inferiority and inadequacy.

Secondly, our use of, and emphasis in, Black Theology should be different. Black Theology should not be over pre-occupied with racism, rather it should be used instrumentally to disclose the power of the pneumatological assumption as a tool of liberation and empowerment. In short, Black Theology must help to creatively transform the pneumatological assumption into realized pneumatology— it must utilize its religious and

theological insights in the creation of a new matrix of Black consciousness and narratives of ascent and achievement.

Thirdly, there is a need for a new kind of organisational development and culture in the Church of God that goes beyond the response of both Ellis and Powell that was discussed in the last chapter. The pneumatological assumption should challenge Black leaders in the Church of God to do business differently. I argued earlier that Black leaders in the Church of God may have to accommodate themselves to exigencies of the reality of historic intra-Pentecostal dilemma. The challenge for Black leaders in the future should be to develop confident and competent leaders as role models in the community, rather than expending an inordinate amount of energy in trying to convince the White Executive in Cleveland of the moral imperative of the need to mirror a polity that reflects the equality inherent in the pneumatological assumption and spiritual endowment.

During the final stages of my research[12], two fundamental questions were put to the International Executive of the Church of God in Cleveland

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[12] There is a seductive tendency to try to pursue every so-called 'important' areas and development associated with one's Ph.D. research; and to succumb to the seduction often means delayed completion of the project. I can take encouragement from the wisdom of the late Professor Colin Gunton in this regard: 'the importance of a suitable topic for research is that what is done at this crucial stage of intellectual development sets the direction for the whole of the intellectual life that follows'. (See Colin E. Gunton, Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth, London, SCM Press:2001, second edition. First published in 1978 by Oxford University Press, p.xi.) Three areas for further research would include: (1) A review of inter-Pentecostal developments a decade after the 1994 Memphis colloquy and the promulgation of the Racial Reconciliation Manifesto (RRM); (2) A history and sociology of the New Testament Church of God in Britain (1953-2003), focusing on the role of the church in civic leadership (this is undoubtedly the central agenda of Bishop Eric Brown's, the new Administrative Bishop of the NTCG since 2002, 'Big Move' philosophy) and social cohesion ; (3) A study of the ways in which the pneumatological assumption implicit in Black/Liberation theologies is used in Black Independent African churches in Britain—the new Africanization of Pentecostalism in Britain.

about racism and representation. The first question was concerned with eliciting the views of the Executive on the extent to which 'Memphis opened a genuine discourse on racism in Pentecostalism with a view to changing structures and policies to be multi-racial and more inclusive'; and the second question was asking, in relation to the Resolution on *Internationalization of the Church*, 'what evidence' there was of 'a multi-racial paradigm in leadership and decision-making positions pre and post-Memphis in the Church of God?'[13] Regrettably, no response was received from the leadership.

The issue of racism in the Church of God will not disappear because the leadership refuse to address it. There still needs to be a 'genuine discourse' on racism in the Church, and the courage to address the structure of representation. In 2004 the Church of God will convene its 70th General Assembly in Texas. Black leaders will, again, continue their 'civil rights' struggles for equality in ministry. There is a rich historical and theological Pentecostal heritage which the church of the twenty-first century can draw upon in resolving the problem of 'race' and the 'colour-line' spoken of by DuBois in the early twentieth century, if enough courageous individuals on both sides are willing to address the issue. St. Augustine said that 'Hope' has two beautiful daughters, whose names are 'Anger' and 'Courage': 'anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are'. I hope that the Church of God will, as it prepares for its General Assembly in 2004, use the legitimate 'anger' felt by its marginalized Black leadership to inspire 'courage' to reflect a true internationalization of the

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[13] Letter sent to Dr. Lamar Vest, 1 January, 2003.

Executive leadership of the Church. If the foregoing discussion helps the process – the 'campaign of righteousness' as Edwards calls it – I will have deemed my reward to be a rich one indeed. 'God's not dead, He is alive...'

List of Abbreviations:

ACEA	African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance
AoG	Assemblies of God
BMC	Black Majority Church
BTDH	Black Theology, A Documentary History
CBWCP	Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership
ChG	Church of God
CoGIC	Church of God In Christ
DPCM	Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements
FUChJC	First United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic)
MENTCG	Mile End New Testament Church of God
NOI	Nation of Islam
NTA	New Testament Assembly
NTCG	New Testament Church of God
PAW	Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
RRM	Racial Reconciliation Manifesto
WCC	World Council of Churches

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